



**TREATMENT OF HISTORY, MYTH AND
FANTASY IN THE WRITINGS OF SHASHI
THAROOR**

**ABSTRACT
OF
THESIS**

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Philosophy

IN

ENGLISH

By

TAJ MOHAMMAD

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

DR. SAMI RAFIQ

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY
ALIGARH (INDIA)**

2011

ABSTRACT

In this study titled “Treatment of History, Myth and Fantasy in the writings of Shashi Tharoor”, an attempt has been made to discuss and analyze certain aspects of history, myth and fantasy which constitute the recurrent themes in most of his works. Shashi Tharoor is an author preoccupied with history and myth; the readers can discover the abundance of mythological and historical elements in his novels. Besides it, politics has also been the main focus of his novels as it cannot be dissociated from the history of a particular time.

In order to explore the very notion of history, myth and fantasy in the Indian writing in English, Chapter 1 focuses on the works of the lesser known writers of 20th century. The study has excluded the celebrated trio of Indian English fiction Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K.Narayan. Chapter 1 is a brief introduction to almost all the lesser known writers of post colonial India, their main works and themes taken up by them. Most of the writers have focused on the real issues of postcolonial India. Undoubtedly, history and politics are the major themes of almost all the writers after Independence. Chapter 1 also throws a cursory glance on all the fiction and non-fiction works of Shashi Tharoor. Like most of the writers, Tharoor has also been concerned with the socio-political, historical and cultural aspects of India. What makes Tharoor different from his contemporaries is the treatment of myth in his works. There is no other contemporary of Tharoor who has dealt so well with the ancient Hindu mythology.

Chapter 2 manifests the elements of history, myth and fantasy in *The Great Indian Novel*. Its theme is received from the mythical epic *The Mahabharata*. Tharoor has rewritten the great epic and has defamiliarised many of the events and characters here. The mythical characters from *The Mahabharata* are made to relive their lives as the heroes of Indian independence movement. Tharoor has parodied not only the mythical characters of *The Mahabharata* but also many events of the great epic.

The novel contains strong components of satire on the modern political system that is devoid of moral and ethical values. Tharoor goes back to the mythical past of India and assumes it to be a perfect instrument to instruct the present political system.

Satire and parody are perceived throughout the novel. He has mocked the heroes of Indian independence who are usually taken in high esteem. The novel is an epic but the treatment given to many of the personalities and events make it more of a mock heroic epic.

The novel advocates the concept of dharma very positively. *The Mahabharata* is a war not between individuals but between groups of people. The war symbolizes a conflict between good and evil. Tharoor proves that the struggle between good and evil is not the struggle of *The Mahabharata* time but the struggle of every age.

Chapter 2 exposes several concealed facts about Gandhi and Nehru. These two personalities have been the direct targets of Tharoor's satire. Contrary to the expectations, he has lavished considerable praise on Jinnah.

Unlike other Indian historians, he did not consider Jinnah to be the only moving spirit behind Pakistan. He has assigned Gandhi and Nehru an equal responsibility for the partition. The novel covers the history of about ninety years. It begins from colonial period and ends to the post colonial time.

Chapter 2 provides a burlesque treatment to the struggle of Indian independence. All the characters of the Indian independence movement are discussed very minutely. Tharoor has fictionalized certain episodes and events from the Indian history. He has explained various movements like civil disobedience and non-cooperation in detail. He has also parodied many events like the Dandi March and hunger strike.

The novel also sketches the events and episodes of partition. It reveals how partition divided the great land. Freedom came to India but it brought joy to no one as the country was divided. The partition was done in the name of religion. Tharoor revealed how both the communities Hindus and Muslims suffered a lot as an aftermath of partition.

Chapter 2 offers a detailed description of the formation of two major political parties of India: the congress and Muslim League. It exhibits the growth of these two national parties. There is no doubt that the conflict between these two parties became the cause of partition later on. It also illustrates the rule of the Congress party after independence.

The chapter also focuses on the emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi. The institutions of democracy were attacked under the leadership of Indira Gandhi. This chapter presents an insight into how the country overcame this

crisis. When the Congress lost the power, Indira Gandhi was brought to the court for her allegedly corrupt practices.

So the novel, discussed in chapter 2 seems to be a historical narrative but the mythical thread runs with it. It is an incredible combination of history, myth and fantasy. History produces a wonderful effect on readers when it is mixed with mythology and fantasy.

Chapter 3 deals with *Riot*, a well known novel of Tharoor. It primarily focuses on the history of post colonial India. It presents the challenges of post independent India. India confronts several problems. Communal disharmony is one of the most burning issues. The communal riots have been perpetual after independence. Tharoor is also very judgmental of the political personas here, particularly the communal ones. The common thread of the theme of history and politics also runs here.

This chapter narrates how this novel is unique in its writing style. It is a departure from traditional novel form. The novel is not monologic rather polyphonic. There are various characters, sources and agents in the novel. They have their own voices. The novelist does not dominate any one of them; rather he provides adequate liberty to every character to present his or her own point of view. Tharoor has employed here diverse voices with the help of newspaper articles, report writing, letters, diary entries, radio scripts, interview transcripts, scrap book entries, self-composed poetry and journal extracts. They help in the narration of the novel.

Chapter 3 discusses Bakhtin's concept of polyphony and its application to the novel. The theory of polyphony comprises several voices that cannot be entertained as one. Bakhtin proved that the nature of the novel is not monologic but polyphonic. Tharoor's *Riot* is an excellent example of a polyphonic novel in which the author, the protagonist, the narrator, the reader and even the voices outside the text constitute an effect of polyphony. The outside voices are the cultural, religious and historical contexts that cannot be detached from the novel.

Chapter 3 illustrates the rich elements of heteroglossia present in the novel. It presents a form in which different dialogues are presented. The novel is dialogic as it permits other voices to participate in the novel. These varieties of dialogues assist the readers to perceive a subject from different perspectives.

This chapter explains how different points of view representing different classes- middle class, educated class, lower class, elite class and their approaches to the history present a clash with each other. There are communal people like Ram Charan who desire to communalize history. There are also some secular figures like Lakshman, Gurinder and Prof. Sarwar who consider the communal people a big threat to the unity of India.

Riot is not only a hate novel but also a love novel. Despite all the communal frenzy, the novel also describes a romantic love story between Lakshman, the district Magistrate and Priscilla, an American girl. Lakshman loved her deeply but could not marry her because he was a married man. Moreover, the novel also presents the cultural clash between the East and the

West. Lakshman, a symbol of eastern culture, could not reconcile with the idea of marrying Priscilla who represents the western culture and values. Their love was based on lust and did not have any substance in it. Lakshman's involvement in the murder of Priscilla cannot be neglected. He had physical relation with Priscilla and she was pregnant at the time of her murder. The mystery of the murder of Priscilla is not solved by any of the polyphonic agents in the novel. So Lakshman is only a suspect, not a culprit.

Riot includes different modes of narrative such as realism, naturalism, fantasy and postmodernism. The novel is an amalgam of these various genres. Lakshman fantasizes about Priscilla while his responsibilities towards his family are the part of realism. The two voices of realism and fantasy are very apt in the novel.

This chapter illustrates Bakhtin's concept of polyphonic novel in which truth is not a finalized product but an ongoing process that is open with no conclusion. Truth of Ram Charan may be different from the truth of Lakshman and Sarwar. There are only different perspectives to look at truth, but it is not given any final entity.

Having analyzed the rich elements of history and myth, an attempt has been made in Chapter 4 to read Tharoor as a commentator on Bollywood. Here too Tharoor has satirized politics and shattered many myths of contemporary Indian cinema. The chapter primarily concentrates on the corruption prevalent in Bollywood. It is based on a critically acclaimed novel of Tharoor known as *Show Business*. The chapter exhibits how Tharoor reinvents Bollywood and the

history of a super star Ashok Banjara. It is a satire on Bollywood. He has criticized the glamorous life of the so called actors and actresses. Tharoor has employed parody, satire, humor and irony throughout the novel. Bollywood has constructed many stories from time to time, and they have become a sort of myth in Indian society. Bollywood is not only a means of movie production but it also stands for the Indian society, culture, politics and mythology.

Tharoor also satirizes here the political system of India. Bollywood is very much influenced by the politics of India. Almost all the big producers and directors have the political connections. Tharoor's *Show Business* is very much close to Shobha De's *Starry Nights* in the treatment of its theme. The chapter has explained how both of the novelists have talked about the prevalent corruption in Bollywood. They have attempted to establish a connection between Bollywood, politics and the underworld. The chapter also focuses on the issues of black money. It satirizes not only film but also political world.

Tharoor has debunked certain myths regarding Bollywood. He has attacked the so called actors of Bollywood who are considered no less than gods in the Indian society. The novel is an eye opening experience for the cinema goers. It shocks many of the readers who believe in the willing suspension of disbelief created by Bollywood. Tharoor has revealed the corruption that goes behind the curtains. Ashok Banjara, the protagonist, is a direct victim of Tharoor's satire. Ashok is generally treated as a god in Indian society. Tharoor has shown the real face of Ashok. He has sexual relations with many of the actresses. Moreover, he is a very greedy man in his personal life.

He is not loyal to his wife. He is not good to his parents and his brother. He does not care for his own daughters. He only runs after money and glamour.

Ashok joins politics only to earn money. He does not have any understanding of the political system of India. Being a star, he has people's sympathy and love. It makes him win a seat. Once he wins, he does not care for the public sentiments at all. He is busy only in making money. Through the character of Ashok, Tharoor satirizes here the democratic set-up of India and how it can be exploited by unscrupulous elements. Shobha De has also satirized the Indian political system in the same way. Both of the novelists have sketched a true picture of Bollywood and its politics.

Chapter 4 further illustrates how like in many of his novels, here too. Tharoor has used elements of mythology. He goes back to ancient mythology. He realizes only ancient Indian mythology can provide a solution for the present challenges that India is facing today. Mythology has been a real inspiration for Indian society. Tharoor fictionalizes a movie *Kalki* here. It is an ironical movie. He considers Kalki to be the incarnation of god. He has come to earth to destroy evils from earth. Ironically, the role of Kali is acted by Ashok himself who is an embodiment of evil. Kalki's motive to come to earth is to demolish evil. Ashok encounters a serious accident during the shooting of this movie. He is on the death bed. The purpose of Kalki to come on earth is accomplished because his first victim is Ashok, the representative of evil. The novel ends here but it shatters a myth regarding Bollywood and its super stars.

Chapter 5 is based on Tharoor's collection of short stories *The Five-Dollar Smile and Other Stories*. It includes short stories on several themes like love, sex, hypocrisy, deceit, adultery, poverty, politics etc. In this chapter an attempt has been made to show how Tharoor satirizes the different social, moral and political institutions. Here his primary focus is to reveal the truth of human relationships. He attacks the hypocritical society. Tharoor seems to be a great satirist of his age. He has also shattered many myths here regarding the personal relationships of the people.

Most of the stories in the collection focus on the theme of love and lust. Like *Show Business*, here too he has criticized the casual sex that is very common in society. Indian society is directly influenced by western system of education and Bollywood. The stories reveal that students who live together in the university hostel usually develop physical relations. It is something that is not considered good in Indian society as sex is still a taboo. Many of the stories present a strong conflict between a traditional society and western education.

Tharoor reveals the sexual curiosities of sexually deprived Indian youth. They do not get sex education either in colleges or at home. That is why they indulge in unhealthy sexual practices. The story "Auntie Rita" is the best example of it. It portrays the character of a young man, Arjun who has sexual relations with his own aunt.

The collection also illustrates the issue of abject poverty that Indian society is passing through. The story "Five Dollar Smile" shatters many myths of the NGOs which earn money in the name of the poor and exploit them. The

story “The Boutique” describes the strong class consciousness in the Indian society. It shows how the Indian society is divided on the basis of financial status.

The story “The Political Murder” exhibits a very ugly face of Indian politics and bureaucracy. Tharoor attempts to expose how bureaucracy and politics join hands to exploit the Indian people. It reveals that political murders are prevalent in Indian society. Most of the times, bureaucrats are bribed to hide the facts. Tharoor has satirized both politics and bureaucracy here.

Chapter 6 of the study discusses how an overall observation of Tharoor proves that he is primarily concerned with the history, myth and politics. The same themes are recurrent in most of his works. Tharoor is unhappy with the contemporary political situation of India that has lost its path. He wishes to bring it to the right track. For this purpose he seeks inspiration from the ancient Hindu mythology. He has adopted the characters of ancient Hindu mythology and parodied them. The efforts of Tharoor not only defamiliarise the history but also assert the importance of Indian mythology.



**TREATMENT OF HISTORY, MYTH AND
FANTASY IN THE WRITINGS OF SHASHI
THAROOR**

THESIS

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF

Doctor of Philosophy

IN

ENGLISH

By

TAJ MOHAMMAD

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

DR. SAMI RAFIQ

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY
ALIGARH (INDIA)**

2011



29 SEP 2014



T8395

Dedicated
To my
Parents: Late Mr. Mahfooz
Khan and
Mrs. Shahin Akhtar



Phones [Off. : 0571-2700920-22
Extn. : 1425, 1426

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY, ALIGARH - 202002 (INDIA)

Ref. No.....

Dated...../...../.....

Certificate

This is to certify that *Mr. Taj Mohammad's* thesis entitled
*"Treatment of History, Myth and Fantasy in the Writings of Shashi
Tharoor"* is an original work to the best of my knowledge and is fit for
submission for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in English.


(Sami Rafiq)
Supervisor

CONTENTS

Title	Page No.
Acknowledgement	i
Preface	iii
Chapter 1 – Introduction	1
Chapter 2 – History and Myth in <i>The Great Indian Novel</i>	25
Chapter 3 – Representing Contemporary History of India:	
<i>Riot as a Polyphonic Novel</i>	71
Chapter 4 –Treating Contemporary Myths: Politics and Fantasy	
in <i>Show Business</i>	102
Chapter 5 – Debunking stereotypes and Myths: <i>The Five-Dollar</i>	
<i>Smile and Other Stories</i>	134
Chapter 6 – Conclusion	157
Select Bibliography	166

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost I offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Sami Rafiq who has supported me throughout my thesis with her patience and knowledge. I attribute the level of my degree to her encouragement and effort. Without her this thesis would only have been a dream for me.

It is an honor for me to get the guidance of Dr. M. Asim Siddiqui who has offered much advice and insight throughout my work on Shashi Tharoor. Dr. M. Asim Siddiqui provided an experienced ear for my doubts about writing a thesis. My utmost gratitude to Prof. A.R. Kidwai, my mentor, without whose knowledge and assistance, this study would not have been successful. He has made available his support in a number of ways. I also thank Prof. S.N. Zeba, Chairman, Department of English, A.M.U., Aligarh for her kindness and help.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my great friend Dr. M. Askandar Iqbal who introduced me to a research program. My thanks are also to Dr. Mohd. Nazim, Dr. Mohammad Faiez, Dr. Haris Qadir, Ghayas Ahmad Khan, Sarfaraz Khan, Shabih Hasan Khan Lodhi, Robert Bixler, my closest friends who have been there with me through all the ups and downs of this research work. I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. S.M. Hashim who guided me from the day I joined this university.

My parents deserve special mention for their inseparable support and prayers. My Father, Late Mahfooz Khan, had been very supportive to me. It

was his dream. Sadly, he passed away three months before the completion of this thesis. I wish he could have seen this work. My Mother, Shahin Akhtar, is the one who sincerely raised me with her caring and gently love. Her blessings were always with me. This thesis was completed during a difficult time in my life, it would have been impossible without the emotional support of my sisters Hina Khan, Mumtaz Khan, Kehkasha Khan and brother-in-law Mr. Salim Khan. I am really indebted to my friend, Mohd. Younus, who took care of my family when I was away.

Words fail me to express my appreciation to the special lady whose dedication, love and persistent confidence in me, has taken the load off my shoulder. She did not talk me until I wrote five pages everyday of this thesis. This thesis is a gift of her friendship that would always remain with me. It is the result of her inspiration and my perspiration.

Finally, I would like to thank all the office members specially Mr. Khan Mohammad Parvez, Mr. Aqil and Mr. Sohil of the Department of English, AM.U., Aligarh. I am also thankful to the members of Maulana Azad Library, A.M.U., Aligarh, and N.C.S.U., USA to cooperate me in all possible ways.

Taj Mohammad

PREFACE

The objective of this study entitled “Treatment of History, Myth and Fantasy in the writings of Shashi Tharoor”, is to explore the elements of history, myth and fantasy as reflected in the writings of the author. Tharoor seems to be much interested in the historical past of India. History fascinates him. In all of his fiction and non-fiction works, the elements of history are found in abundance. History cannot be studied in isolation. It carries with itself other aspects too. History is not only an official record of the facts and dates rather it presents an overall picture of the social and political aspects of an age. That is why politics is also a common feature of his works. He has deliberately discussed the political system of India. Be it *The Great Indian Novel*, *Riot* or *Show Business*, elements of history and politics are common everywhere in his writing.

The Great Indian Novel discusses the historical and political aspects of colonial India in particular while *Riot* deals with the history and politics of postcolonial India. *Show Business* also exposes the loopholes in the political system. Tharoor feels that the present political system of India has deviated from its path and needs to be instructed. To instruct the morally degraded political world, he finds no better medium than the ancient mythology of India. Tharoor considers ancient mythology to be an amalgam of moral and ethical virtues. It has a wonderful commentary on all the aspects of life whether it is politics, social system or spiritualism. Tharoor is inspired by *The*

Mahabharata, the classical epic of India that is a masterpiece of Hindu mythology. He has taken the characters and incidents of ancient Hindu mythology and parodied them keeping an eye on the freedom fighters and different movements of Independence struggle.

History and myth are very common features of Tharoor's work. They are very skillfully woven in his work with the help of fantasy. I was attracted by these common attributes of Tharoor's works. There could not be any other aspect more important than the treatment of these three elements. I have taken into account the historical perspectives and the mythological aspects of his works. During my research, I discovered that there are dimensions other than history myth and fantasy. His works can also be read as a postmodern narrative though I kept myself primarily focused on the elements of history, myth and fantasy.

In the present study an attempt is also made to trace the development of critical literature on Shashi Tharoor. However, many other sources are also taken into consideration to discuss the historical developments of colonial and postcolonial India. The references mention historical, mythological, sociological and religious approaches. I have also attempted to discuss the interpretations of prominent critics on Shashi Tharoor. To understand the great epic *The Mahabharata*, I have primarily relied on P. Lal's translation into English known as *The Mahabharata of Ved Vyasa*. A select bibliography at the end lists the books and sources studied and consulted for this study.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Indian writers of English have been grappling with the Indian social and political problems. Most of them do not live in India yet they have not broken their ties with their motherland. They pay India back in the form of their writing that they write about Indian people, its culture and civilization. There are three important writers who have established the genre of the Indian writing in English- R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. They are very popular because they have written about the real India and the problems that India is facing these days. There are some minor writers who have also been addressing the same issues through their works yet they have not got the same kind of recognition.

These three important writers have outshined the minor writers whose contribution to Indian writing is underestimated as they never come into the limelight. There is an urgent need to look beyond the established canon of Indian writing and study the works of the lesser known writers who have been neglected so often in Indian critical and literary circles.

Among the lesser known writers, one important name is of Bhabani Bhattacharya whose major novels are *So Many Hungers*(1947), *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954), *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960), *Shadow from Laddakh* (1966) and *A Dream in Hawaii* (1978). As a novelist his favorite themes are the social, political and economic hardships in India. These are some of the important issues the post-colonial writers are concerned with.

So Many Hungers has sketched the visual picture of the poor people in the colonial time. It describes the empty belly of the poor in India as well as their strong will to get Independence from the British.

Another important novelist is G.V. Desani who has got acclaim for his novel *All about H. Hatter* which appeared in 1948 and is considered a masterpiece. Mr. Hatter himself is the hero as well the narrator of the novel. The novel is about the protagonist's journey beyond the limitations of caste, creed and class.

Kamala Markandaya, a woman novelist, is also an important name among the Indian writers of English who has ten novels to her credit and has established herself well among the Indian writers in English. Her novels are: *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1967), *The Coffer Dams* (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977) and *The Pleasure City* (1982). Her novel abounds in complexity and intricacy and new themes and characters are found in her novels. She is not only a good story teller but also a master of clarity, lucidity and an appealing style.

Another important name among the women novelists is that of Nayantara Sahgal who joined literary circle in 1954 with her autobiographical novel *Prison and Chocolate Cake* (memoir; 1954). She later produced other novels like *A Time to Be Happy* (1958), *From Fear Set Free* (1962), *This Time of Morning* (1965), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), and *The Day in Shadow*

(1971). Socio-political themes are very common in her novels and the touch of humanism is all prevalent.

Khushwant Singh is the next remarkable novelist of 1950s. He was a lawyer but the Partition turned him into a novelist. His well known novel is *Train to Pakistan* in which he has dealt with the trauma of Partition and how a communal division was created among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in a tiny village, Mano-Majra. The novel lays bare the evil impact of Partition as well as the insanity of two-nation theory. His next important novel is *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) which describes the war years 1942-47. The novel focuses on a family of Punjab and their hardships. Through his short stories he has exposed the hypocritical aspects of Indian society. His writings present the true picture of India society. His well known short story "Mark of Vishnu" attacks the superstitions prevalent in Indian society.

Manohar Malgonkar is also an important novelist who has dealt with socio-political problems of the country, Indian history, Indo-British conflict during the freedom struggle etc. His major novels are *Distant Drum* (1960), *Combat of Shadows* (1962), *The Princes* (1963), *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) and *The Devil's Wind* (1972).

Attia Hosain's novel *Sunlight on a Broken Column* which appeared in 1961 deals with the social and political aspects of Indian society. The novel, in an autobiographical form, is divided into four parts and covers a period of about twenty years. The novelist through the character of Laila, an orphan girl,

raises the issue of child marriage, female education and the changed relations in the aftermath of the communalization of politics in 1930s.

In the mid sixties, there was a sudden shift in the approach of the writers and they kept aside the themes of socio-political and economic exploitation of the individuals as well as society. Now the writers were more concerned with an individual's search of identity or his role and position in the society. They focused more on the inner tensions and struggles of their characters. One well known name in this regard is that of Anita Desai whose novels deal more with the mental dilemma of the protagonist than the physical ones. Her major novels are *Cry the Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye-Bye Black Bird* (1971), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Clear Light of the Day* (1980), *The Village by the Sea* (1983) etc. She particularly deals with the agony of existence, alienation, pessimism and loneliness felt by her heroines in a male-dominated society. She has particularly dealt with the themes of human nature and self-discovery. In this way, she is considered the pioneer of this sort of novels. Anita Desai received Sahitya Akademi Award in 1978 for her *Fire on the Mountain*.

Arun Joshi (1939-93) is another notable novelist who also deals with the inner being of his characters. His major novels are *The Foreigner* (1963), *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971), *The Apprentice* (1974), and *Last Labyrinth* (1981). The protagonists of her novels find it difficult to adjust in a

society which is culturally degraded. For example, his novel *The Foreigner* has cross-cultural setting and is inspired by his experiences in U.S.A.

Chaman Nahal is a well known novelist of the 1970s who began his literary career in 1973 with the novel *My True Faces*. This novel is not so refined and could not do well in the literary circles. He is better known for his next novel *Azadi* (1975) which presents the vision of Indian Independence and the unfortunate partition of the country in a very realistic and artistic way. It is a political novel where the novelist has recorded the painful experiences during and after the partition. This novel won him the Sahitya Akademy Award in 1975. His next novel *The Crown and the Loin Cloth* (1981) portrays the non-co-operation movement of the Indians against the British during 1920-22.

The next well known novelist in this sequence is Salman Rushdie who is placed among the novelists of the eighties and nineties. His *Midnight's Children* which published in 1981 made its mark on national and international literary scene. With this novel Indian writing in English got a new dimension and burst on international literary scene. This novel won him the coveted Booker Award for 1981 as well as the James Tait Black memorial prize. It is a voluminous novel that amazingly describes a generation of Indians born at midnight of 15th August 1947. His other novels include *Shame* (1983), *The Satanic Verses* (1988), and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1991).

Amitav Ghosh is another important name who is also one of the best novelists of 1980s. His major novels are *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *The*

Shadow Lines (1988) and *In an Antique Land* (1992). *The Circle of Reason* is a book about good and evil and is based on the struggle of protagonist for salvation. He writes about the family and relationships in a disintegrating society. Vikram Seth is another well known figure among the writers of the present age. His *Golden Gate* (1986) is a novel written in verse form and he chooses the pattern of a sonnet for this purpose. The novel deals with the human psyche and sense of loneliness of human beings in the present time. Seth's another well known novel is *A Suitable Boy* which came in 1993 and deals particularly with the social and religious customs of India. The novel also focuses on the loneliness of a young woman and her quest for true love.

Shashi Deshpande is an important figure among the women writers. She tries to portray the concept of an independent and revolutionary woman who has broken all the social taboos and emerged as a strong woman having her own identity which is not determined by the man. Her novel *That Long Silence* (1989) advocates the concept of modern woman where her heroine Jaya refuses herself to be dominated by her husband after maintaining silence for a long time.

Shobha De has also got a remarkable place among the women novelists. Her four novels: *Socialite Evening* (1989), *Starry Nights* (1991), *Sisters* (1992) and *Strange Obsession* (1992) have secured her place among the writers writing in English. Like Shashi Tharoor, she has also satirized the Bollywood, high class society and has unmasked the real face of the so-called glamorous

people. Her novel *Starry Nights* very much resembles Tharoor's *Show Business* in its theme, approach and treatment. She deals with the domestic issues and the psychological loneliness of upper class women. She also satirizes the institution of marriage which has no meaning in upper class Indian society.

Bharti Mukherjee is another important woman novelist who is settled in USA. Her most important novel *Jasmine* (1990) is based on the experiences of an immigrant from India to the USA. The novel deals with the sense of loneliness of the heroine Jasmine who feels culturally uprooted in an alien land. In her next novel *The Holder of the World*, she records America's history. She also has two other novels to her credit, *The Tiger's Daughter* and *Darkness and Wife* which were published in the 1990.

Amit Chaudhuri is another well known novelist of this period whose maiden novel *A Strange and Sublime Address*, published in 1992, won him the Society of Author's prestigious Betty Trask Award and also the Guardian fiction prize. The novel is a celebration of childhood. The novelist focuses on childhood's simple joys as well as makes his readers see the world from a child's point of view.

A very well known name without whom the Indian literary scene seems to be incomplete is Arundhati Roy. Her novel *The God of Small Things* fetched her prestigious Bookers prize for 1997. The novel is based on the typical south Indian life and depicts different social customs and superstitions. The novel is full of ambition and sparkle.

A close survey of the above mentioned writers brings to light that post-colonial writers have been primarily engaged with the issues of national importance. They have not dissociated themselves from the real issues India is facing as Farbat Singh says: "...By and large, the Indian English novelist has attempted to face the reality around him with greater courage and responsibility..." (Singh). The socio-political environment has been the very popular theme among the novelists after independence. Besides, they have also dealt with the personal lives of the individuals and have exposed the real face of the hypocrites and the aristocrats. Shashi Tharoor has not secured a place like the trio and pioneers of Indian writing in English R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao yet his contribution to the Indian writing in English cannot be overlooked and has its own importance and place.

As it has already been discussed, there is need to look beyond the established canon and break away from the traditional approach to study only the well known writers. The present study deals with the remarkable contribution of a gifted writer Shashi Tharoor to Indian Writing in English. Though he is an expatriate yet he could not free himself from the influence of India. He writes about why India matters to him in a column of *The Hindu* in these words:

I am often asked why, despite my international career, I have set all my books so far in India. The answer is simple. My formative years, from the ages of three to 19, were spent growing up in

India. India shaped my mind, anchored my identity, influenced my beliefs, and made me who I am. India matters immensely to me, and in all my writing, I would like to matter to India. Or, at least, to Indian readers.... (Tharoor)

Like many of the lesser known novelists after the independence, he has also been fascinated by the socio-political conditions of India after independence. He has a special liking for history as he seems to believe that the solutions of the challenges of present political problems somewhere lie in the mythical past of India. He is very much fascinated by the mythological characters of *The Mahabharata* and asserts that this great epic governs the life of the Indians to a great extent. Though this epic is very ancient, its teachings have left their marks on the minds of the Indians. He has rewritten the great epic in his *The Great Indian Novel* as he mentions in his non-fiction work *Bookless in Baghdad* in the following words: "...My fiction is infused, in this sense, with the 'greatness' of India, of Maha Bharta, a greatness that has emerged from the fusion of its myths with the aspirations of its history." (*Bookless in Baghdad*, 25)

He goes far back into the history of India and seeks inspiration from the great epic *The Mahabharata* as it has a wonderful commentary on the politics, religion and mythology of India. In his *The Great Indian Novel*, he has presented a wonderful blend of history and myth with the help of fantasy. Though the novel starts in colonial India and ends in post-colonial one, yet it

addresses the serious socio-political issues that India is facing since independence. He has retold the political history of 20th century through this novel and parodied many important political figures of the time. Farbat Singh aptly remarks:

“...Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) is a retelling of the political history of the 20th century India through a fictional recasting of events, episodes and characters from the Mahabharata. The novelist defamiliarizes contemporary political events by resorting to epic devices....” (Singh)

Like many other post modern novelists he has also used devices like irony, parody, satire, pastiche, met fiction, fabulation etc. In his *The Great Indian Novel* he has parodied important characters of the independence period like Nehru, Gandhi, Jinnah and Patel. In a way he has satirized the whole political system of India after independence which has passed through different political ups and downs. The beauty of this work lies in the fact that Tharoor had wonderfully blended mythology and politics.

His next novel *Riot* deals with the ugly problem of communalism, one of the most burning issues of post-colonial India. Though the seeds of communalism were sowed by the British in the colonial India yet it has been aggravated by the present politicians of post-colonial India. The form of the novel consists in putting together the cutting of different newspapers, diary entries, journals, interview as well as the individual narrations of each

character. The novel is not written in a traditional form that the reader has to start from page first and continue until last to grasp the meaning and message of the novel. Tharoor writes about the form of his novel *Riot* in his non-fiction book, *Bookless in Baghdad* in these words:

And *Riot* is also a departure for me fictionally, because unlike my earlier novels it is not a satirical work...In *Riot* I tell the story through newspaper clippings, diary entries, interviews, transcripts, journals, scrapbooks, even poems written by the character—in other words, using different voices, different stylistic forms, for different fragments of the story....” (*Bookless in Baghdad*, 38)

Another interesting feature of the novel is that Tharoor has juxtaposed love and violence together which are totally different from each other yet the novel maintains its beauty and rhythm. The novel is full of various collisions - personal, political, violent and emotional. Here too, history plays an important role as too much history of India has proved itself to be a kind of problem and often results into communal and sectarian violence.

His next novel which has got world-wide acclaim is *Show Business*. Fantasy plays a vital role in this novel. Tharoor has focused here particularly on the corruption prevalent in the film world. Bollywood which is considered a world of glamour is very hollow from inside. Tharoor has debunked here many myths regarding the film world, its actors and actresses. Here he has also used

satire as a tool to bring the immediate effect in a very artistic manner. The novel is an eye opening experience for the people who take Bollywood in high esteem as Tharoor has thrown light on the dark side of Bollywood and has shown the real face of the glamorous world.

His collection of short stories *The Five-Dollar Smile and Other Stories* includes his fictional experiences on many subjects. He has written stories on many subjects like love, sex, adultery, poverty, extra and premarital relationships. He has broken many myths in this collection and has thrown light on the reality of many relationships. The stories were written by him at an adolescent age and also include the reaction of a teenage boy to different mysteries of life and complex issues. The stories display the obsession of a teenage boy with sex and other curiosities related to sex life. However, the collection also includes a good commentary on the social, political and economic issues of the time.

Tharoor has not only written fiction works but also non-fiction works where his favorite themes are social, political and historical issues of India. Besides, he has also taken into consideration the economic growth of India. He has also written short stories as well as a wonderful commentary on the writers in his well known book *Bookless in Baghdad*. His fascination with history may be observed in his non-fiction works too.

His non-fiction book *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* is an amalgam of India's past and future. He was inspired by the golden jubilee

anniversary of India's independence. He has focused on the challenges that India had in past and may have in future. The novel is a wonderful commentary on the variety of India's culture, religion, languages, climate, economy etc. He has very well dealt with the pluralistic aspects of Indian society. One of the important themes of the book is India's rich cultural heritage and its contribution to the Western world. He describes different historical incidents in detail in this work. As history, politics and key political personalities have been his favorite themes, he has described the role of important personalities like Gandhi and Nehru. He sees these personalities in the light of the incidents which happened during and after partition and that is why he has been very harsh while treating their role in post-colonial India. One such example is the critical treatment of the role of Gandhi and his concept of Truth: "Yet Gandhi's Truth was essentially his own...No, Gandhi's "triumph" did not change the world forever. It is, sadly, a matter of doubt whether he triumphed at all." (*From Midnight to the Millennium*, 22)

Tharoor has certainly made an irresponsible statement about Gandhi and that is so because he has seen Gandhi only in the light of a politician and freedom fighter and does not take into consideration other dimension of his personality. Contrary to this statement, as far as Gandhi's victory is concerned; it was undoubtedly his own. The awakening and awareness he created among masses made freedom possible under his leadership. Partition was not his failure; it was a collective blunder of Jinnah, Nehru and Patel.

Like Nehru Tharoor has also presented India as a country having unity in its diversity. In spite of much cultural and linguistic diversity, India stands for unity. He has also quoted Winston Churchill: "India is merely a geographical expression. It is no more a single country than the Equator."
(*From Midnight to the Millennium*, 7)

Churchill is right here but it is also a fact that there is no country on earth which has such a wonderful variety of ethnic groups, climate, topography, religion, language, culture etc. The greatness of India lies in the fact that it has managed itself with all these varieties and has emerged as one country and one identity known as India. In an interview given to Joanne Myers, Tharoor has appreciated the role of democracy to bring people of different religions and ethnic groups together and give them their due place in Indian political framework. He says:

Three years ago after the largest single exercise in democratic franchise anywhere in the world...after that election and the results came out, we had the extraordinary phenomenon of a female political leader who is a Roman Catholic of Italian background, Sonia Gandhi, winning the election and making way for a Sikh, Manmohan Singh, to be sworn as prime minister by a Muslim, President Abdul Kalam, in a country 81 percent Hindu.
(Myers)

He has very skillfully thrown light on different issues - democracy, caste and troublesome legacy of Indira Gandhi. He has divided the whole book into different chapters and each of them presents some facts and challenges about India. He is very critical about the Government policies of reservation and quota when he describes it as a tool of discrimination and a means to divide the people in his chapter "Schedule Castes, Unscheduled Change". He describes how the policy of favoring a particular community has disintegrated the whole society.

He has also focused on the growing corruption and criminalization in India. Though he has presented many of the negative aspects of Indian society, his approach seems to be very positive as he believes that his countrymen would certainly find solutions to these problems which have been gnawing at the delicate fabric of Indian polity and society.

He is interested not only in the politics of India but also in the great political figures of India who are a kind of milestone in the political world. His favorite political figures are Nehru, Gandhi, Jinnah and Patel. His non-fiction work *Nehru: The Invention of India* is a wonderful commentary on Nehru, the famous political figure of India who helped India win freedom. Though he has thrown light on the serious tactical and political mistakes made by Nehru that gave India its modern face, he also admires him for his sincere devotion towards India.

Tharoor's *Nehru: The Invention of India* is the biography of Pandit Nehru, the first prime minister of India. Tharoor has got a special kind of fascination for the important political figures of Independence. He has dealt with almost all the aspects of the life of Nehru, right from his student days to his joining Gandhi in his efforts to win the freedom. Tharoor has described him as a kind of aristocrat from a very wealthy family of the lawyer Motilal Nehru, his father. He has also described his foreign education at Harrow and Cambridge as well as his belief in socialism. Tharoor has described in detail Nehru's efforts to win India's freedom. He participated in different movements and struggled for freedom and went to jail many times for opposing the policies of the British in India. He was the person Gandhi believed most. After Gandhi's assassination he was the most important person in the political circle of India and an embodiment of India's freedom.

In his book *The Elephant, the Tiger, and the Cell Phone: Reflections on India, the Emerging 21st- Century Power*, Tharoor has described about the economic revolution and technological advancement in the last two decades. The elephant is a symbol of a huge and powerful country like India that has its own culture and civilization and that is transforming itself from a lethargic elephant to an active tiger. He talks about politics, culture, economics, society and sports in this book. As Tharoor has a special liking for cricket and Bollywood, here too he has glorified these two important indulgences of Indian society. He also throws light on the cell phone and technological revolution in India. Tharoor has described how in a country like India where people had to

wait many years to get a telephone connection and that used to be only a luxury afforded by the wealthy people of India had a sudden transformation and cell phone became the asset even of the poorer section of the society. There is no doubt in the fact that India has been doing very well in economy and technology for the last few years. India in 21st century is emerging as a supreme power and that attracts the attention of the world. Tharoor has been impressed with the economic development of India and the whole work focuses on the economic, scientific and technical revolution of India. He has glorified the role of Nehru and IT revolution that has created the face of present India.

He also talks about unity in the diversity of India in this book. As there are different linguistic, cultural, religious and ethnic groups yet despite their different identities they are one, known as Indians. However, Tharoor opines that this cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity also presents a kind of challenge to the path of progress and development as it has often resulted into clashes among the people of different communities.

His non-fiction work *Reasons of States* presents a wonderful commentary on the politics of India. He has given insights into the foreign policies of India and it seems that he is one of the experts on the foreign policies. He has given a wonderful treatment to the domestic as well as international aspects of Indian politics. Almost all the fiction and non-fiction works of Tharoor are based on politics in one way or the other.

His *Bookless in Baghdad* is his reflection on different writers and their writing style. He has analyzed their writing style and their approach to the writing genre. He has praised some while he has also criticized many in his essays. He has dealt with different writers in his essays in this book. He does not seem to be very much satisfied with the prose of Narayan as he finds it 'flat and monotonous'. In his essay on Winston Churchill, he calls him 'overweening imperialist' and does not feel pleased with him. He also criticizes Nirad Chaudhary for taking the British in high esteem and looking down upon his own people. Tharoor shows his deep sympathy with Salman Rushdie in his essays and expresses his deep sorrow on the fatwa issued against him. He pays homage to Pushkin, V.S. Naipal and Pablo Neruda. His most touching essay is about the Iraqi people who have to sell their books despite being great lovers of books because of their poor financial condition. He was sent to Iraq on a mission by U.N.O. where he closely observed the lives of a war-torn country and was touched by their poverty. He has recorded his experiences during this visit in his book. The most touching is the scene when he sketches the helplessness of a young man who liked a book so much but could not afford to buy it:

...I spotted a young man, I guessed in his early twenties, picking up a book at which he had been gazing intently for sometime...Then he asked the vendor the price...I asked an Arabic-speaking colleague what the book cost. 'Five hundred dinars,' was the answer. Thirty three US cents...but a week's

ration, perhaps, in a country where the typical middle class wage is 4000 dinars a month. (*Bookless in Baghdad*, 208)

Tharoor shows how war has destroyed the economic condition of the people, discouraging the academic and other pursuits of life. He has not only paid tribute to different writers but also discussed his own works and the inspiration behind them. He has also described his early life and his association and love for books and comics in different periods of his life as books have always been a sort of companion to him.

His book *Kerala—God's Own Country* is an attempt to glorify Kerala's beauty, traditions and culture. He seems to be very much fascinated by the rich cultural and natural beauty of Kerala. It is a writer's work about his own people and culture that is different from the rest of India. Kerala has attracted even the great painter M.F. Husain who has completed a series of astonishing paintings about Kerala. Tharoor has talked about elephant as a very important animal of Kerala and he has celebrated this important animal in his book as a great recognition to Kerala's cultural and natural beauty. They can be found everywhere in Husain's extraordinary evocation of Kerala. The elephants can be found by the waterside, drinking, playing, lurking and gambling. The elephants are featured in every cultural and religious festival of Kerala. They are also a part of celebrations in weddings.

He has also thrown light on the other aspects of cultural and natural beauty of Kerala. Kerala has its own culture that makes it different from the

rest of India. The extraordinary natural beauty of the state, its lagoons, its forests, its beaches, banana groves and coconut trees are very unique and have their own identity. Besides, Kerala is also known for its highest literacy rate as well as the empowerment of women.

Tharoor loves cricket very much. He has talked about cricket in many of his fiction and non-fiction works. Recently he has co-authored a book with Shaharyar Khan, a former Pakistan foreign secretary, on cricket named *Shadows Across the Playing Field: Sixty Years of India-Pakistan Cricket*. The book focuses on the troublesome relationships of cricketing between India and Pakistan from the point of view of two men belonging to two different nations yet having love for the same sport. The book does not record only the love of the two writers for the common game but also focuses on the politics and diplomacy in the sub-continent. Tharoor in his analysis of the sixty years of history of cricket between the two countries establishes secular values and rejects any sort of sectarianism in sport in either country. Shaharyar Khan is an insider who writes about his role as a team manager and the then chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Control Board.

In the book, the two authors talk about the growing popularity of cricket between the two countries and how politics and cricket are interconnected and assess its impact on the game. The most important aspect of the book is that it is the celebration of the talent of the many great cricketers in both the nations which has fascinated the audience for a long time. There is no doubt that there

has been a lot of turmoil in the political circle of India. Pakistan faces problem of terrorism yet cricket is a force that can bring peace and harmony among the people on both the sides of the border. Like other Indian writers in English. Tharoor too has taken into consideration the contemporary issues as the social, mythical, cultural, historical and political aspects of Indian life. His works also deal particularly with the problems of post colonial India. In this way Tharoor cannot be separated from other Indian writers in his approach and treatment to the issues of national importance.

Works Cited

- Alexander, Horace. *Gandhi Through Western Eyes*. Bombay: Jayasinghe. 1969.
- Anand, T.S., ed. *Contemporary Indian Writing in English: critical perceptions*. New Delhi: Surup and Sons, 2005. 220-37
- Bhatnagar, Manmohan, K. "Indian English Literature- Its Rationale and A Critical Introduction." *Indian Writing in English*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar. Vol. 1. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 2001. 1-11. 9 vols.
- . "Alternate Realities – A Note on Indian English Literature." *Indian Writing in English*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar. Vol. 5. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher. 1999. 1-3. 9 vols.
- . "Appraising Indian English Literature—A New Agenda." *Indian Writing in English*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar. Vol. 3. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher. 1999. 1-13. 9 vols.
- . "Indian English Literature—A Perspective." *Indian Writing in English*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar. Vol. 2. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 2001. 1-17. 9 vols.
- . "Indian English Literature—A Stock Taking." *Indian Writing in English*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar. Vol. 4. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 1999. 1-13. 9 vols.
- . "Multiculturalism and Indian (English) Literature." *Indian Writing in English*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar and M. Rajeshwar. Vol. 9. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 2000. 5-13. 9 vols.
- . "The 'Complex Fate' of Indian English Literature." *Indian Writing in English*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar and M. Rajeshwar. Vol. 9. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 2000. 1-4. 9 vols.
- Dodiya, Jaidip Singh. "The Changing Trends in Indian Writing in English with Special reference to Shobha De." *Indian writing in English Perspectives*. Ed. Joya Chakravarty. New Delhi, 2003. 83-86.
- Gandhi, Lingaraja. "An Interview with Dr. Mulk Raj Anand." *Indian English Literature*. Ed. Basavaraj Naikar. Vol. 7. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2007.

Mee, Jon. "After Midnight: The Novel in the 1980s and 1990s." *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English*. Ed. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003. 318-336.

Mehrotra, Arvind Krishna., ed. *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003. 318-36

Mishra, D.S. "Modern Indian Writing in English: An Overview." *Modern Indian Writing in English: An Overview*. Ed. N.D.R. Chandra. 1st ed. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2004. 1-47.

Narasimhaiah, C. D. "Making of Indian English: Some Reflections." *Makers of Indian English Literature*. 1st ed. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2000.15-36.

Paranjape, Makarand. "Common Myths and Misconceptions about Indian English Literature." *Rethinking of Indian English Literature*. Ed. U.M.Nanavati and Prafulle C. Kaur. 1st ed. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2000. 55-70.

Raina, Satnam Kaur. "Theme of Partition in the Post-Independence Indian Fiction in English." *Trends in Indian English Literature*. Ed. T.S. Anand. 1st ed. New Delhi: Creative Books, 2008. 105-113.

Sharma, Ajai. "Midnight's Children in the Light of Vakrokti." *New Perspectives on Indian English Writings*. Ed. Malti Agarwal. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2007. 198-205.

Sharma, Rajesh Kumar. "A Note on Contemporary Indian Fiction in English." *Trends in Indian English Literature*. Ed. T.S. Anand. 1st ed. New Delhi: Creative Books, 2008. 99-104.

Singh, Farbat. "INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL WRITING: SHIFTING THEMES & THOUGHTS - (With special Referance to Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh)". *International Research Journal*, July 2010 ISSN-0975-3486 RNI: RAJBIL 2009/30097 VOL I *ISSUE 10.

Srinath, C.N. "The Invisible Indian English Fiction." *Critical Responses to Indian Writing in English (Essays in Honour of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam)*. Ed. K. Balachandran. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2004.112-125.

Tharoor, Shashi. "The Shashi Tharoor column: A departure, fictionally" *The Hindu*. 16 Sep 2001. 10 May 2011
<<http://hindu.com/thehindu/2001/09/16/stories/13160675.htm>>

---. *Bookless in Baghdad*. Delhi: Penguin, 2005.

- . *India: From Midnight to the Millennium*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1997.
- . Interview with Joanne J. Myers. *Sectarian Violence in India: The Story of the One Riot*. Public Affairs Program. 28 Nov 2001. 10 May 2011
<<http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/resources/transcripts/695.html>>
- Williams, Hayden Moore. "Indian Literature in English: Colonial and Post-Colonial: Social Change and Indian Inwardness." *Galaxy of Indian Writing in English*. Delhi: Akshat Publication, 1987. 1-11.
- Yadav, Shiv Kumar. "Malgonkar's Balancing Acts of Gandhian Ideals in A Bend in the Ganges." *Indian writing in English*. Ed. Mohit K. Ray. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2003. 53-66.

CHAPTER 2

History and Myth in *The Great Indian Novel*

Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* is a work of fiction that borrows from the story of *The Mahabharata*, the great epic of Hindu mythology; it recasts the epic in the context of Indian Independence Movement. Tharoor has reinvented *The Mahabharata* here. The figures are taken from Indian history and transformed into characters from Hindu mythology. The mythical history of India is retold as a history of Indian independence and subsequent history up through the 1980s. In one of his articles entitled "I don't take critics seriously", Tharoor writes about this novel: "The book is a satirical novel and re-invention of an ancient novel in a contemporary way. It is about the highly developed India".

The Mahabharata is an epic tale describing the dynastic struggle over the throne of Hastinapur between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. In this novel, Tharoor recasts the story of Indian democracy as a struggle between groups and individuals for their personal and political gains. The novel is a blend of myth and reality. Mythology is imported through the ancient mythical figures. The reality is presented through the historical figures of modern India. The challenge before the reader is how he has to distinguish between myth and reality as there is a very thin line that separates them. In spite of the fusion of myth and reality, the message of the novel is clear. The novel satirizes the

modern political set up and derives its inspiration from the mythical past of India. The same views are presented in an article “Master of Satire”:

...There is no real line between myth and reality – the whole novel is like a rich tapestry with the reality of Indian politics and history woven together with the epic, mythical threads of *The Mahabharata*. Read between the (often) hilarious lines, and the messages will speak to you.

He deviates from the verse in which the original *Mahabharata* was written. He invokes the help of Ganpathi rather than any muse. The story is to be read in a single sitting. Every word has to be understood well before the reader advances to the next one.

Though *The Mahabharata* was written about 2000 years ago, it still has relevance to the present political system of India. The politics and the challenges of political world are well defined in *The Mahabharata*. Still we find the same kind of people in the political set up. Still we have the binary opposition of just and unjust, good and evil that will probably continue as long as the world exists.

The mythical characters of *The Mahabharata* are given a new recognition. He has personified the historical figures. He has given a new life to the characters of epic as Nanda Kumar in an article “Multiplicity of Voices in the novels of Shashi” comments: “The characters of the epic are made to re-

live their lives in the pre- and post-independent India”. Tharoor has also parodied many historical events in the novel. He seems to be much impressed with the glorious mythical past of India. He envisions it to be a perfect medium to understand Indian politics. In India, history and myth are inseparable. Chakrabarti quotes Partha Chatterjee in his article: “Myth, history, and the contemporary – all become part of the same chronological sequence; one is not distinguished from another; the passage from one to another, consequently, is entirely unproblematic”.

The Great Indian Novel presents two different times from the very beginning: mythical time and historical time. Often they confuse the readers as there is a very long gap between the two. The characters of ancient India are parodied with the characters of modern India. Chakrabarti puts forward the same views:

As *The Great Indian Novel* blends myth and history, two different times operate in the very beginning of the novel: mythical time and historical time. V.V. starts by recounting the genealogy of the characters and the time of that myth-based genealogy does not match historical time (too many generations in too little time: if V.V. “was born with the century”, his children can hardly be grown-up men in the early 1920s as suggested by the historical time). Once the genealogy is cleared and the actual (hi) story gets going, mythical time gives way to

historical time, which is then followed throughout the novel.

(Chakrabarti)

The narrator has not made any effort to bridge this gap. Despite this technique, the novel does not lose its rhythm and beauty and maintains the interest of the readers throughout. It is so because Tharoor presents a new perspective to see the ancient mythical characters. It adds to their personalities and tells something new about the historical figures and events. Thus it challenges the traditional way of looking at them.

Tharoor has taken into account a very common concept of Dharma, the rich contribution to mythology, history and tradition. Dharma is not only just a religion but a set of values. As he covers the ancient values, myths, tradition through the historicity of his text, he seems to explore the 'multiplicity of truth' that runs to offer shape and substance to the idea of India.

Traditionally, *Mahabharata* means Great War. It is an idea taken from the *Grihya Sutr*s written by Aswalayana. It lies there in the form of 'Bharatha'. The very word 'Bharatha' stands for a country, a race and the war. It also denotes to the founder emperor of India. So it signifies the national epic of India.

The epic is so revered in the Hindu faith that it is given the status of fifth Veda. Ved Vyasa has put the spiritual essence of all the *Vedas* and *Upanishadas* in this epic. This work is an amalgam of all the moral, religious

and ethical teachings of Hindu religion. It is not only a work of fiction but an institution in itself. It imparts and guides the core values of this ancient and sacred religion. The writer of this great epic was not an ordinary man but a high profiled one. He has written more than eighteen Puranas, among which *The Mahabharata* stands as his magnum opus. It is admired as the greatest epic ever written in Indian history surpassing even the imagination of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

This novel is named a great epic. It contains many characteristics that qualify it as an epic. Basically, the word epic is taken from the ancient Greek adjective 'epikos' that means a lengthy narrative poem. It usually has serious subjects containing details of heroic deeds and events significant to a culture or nation. Traditional oral poetry in its beginnings can also be called an epic. The classical epics were fundamentally written in oral poetic form, but epics do have written forms. Homer, Vyasa, Virgil, Dante and John Milton's works are in the written form. M.H. Abrams defines an epic in the following terms:

In the strict sense the term epic or heroic poem is applied to a work that meets at least the following criteria: it is a long verse narrative on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style, and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or (in the instance of John Milton's *Paradise lost*) the human race. (Abrams, 76)

The Great Indian novel has many characteristics to qualify as an epic though it does not have all the qualities that an epic must have. There is no doubt that it has a long narrative though in prose. The characters used in this novel certainly belong to high positions in society. The epic covers incidents of the last ninety years. The adventures of the characters certainly form an organic whole through their development of episodes important to the history of a nation or race. The epic certainly has characters from pre and post independent India. They have been allegorized here. Pradip Bhattacharya comments on the theme and epic qualities of the novel:

Thematically speaking, Tharoor's approach to Indian politics through India's greatest epic provides a powerful instrument for us to "place" the events of the last ninety years against the deeply rooted traditions animating our society through the ages. And his point-of-view is all the more welcome in the context of the purely political and genuflectory exercises churned out by journalists-turned-politicians recently. Tharoor's brilliance lies in the selection of the epic prototype to embody his interpretation of the characters of those who shaped (or mis-shaped) India's destiny. (Bhattacharya)

The characters taken from *The Mahabharata* represent many characters during the Independence movement. There is no doubt that he has taken characters from *The Mahabharata*, but in his context they represent the

characters of modern India. As the major portion of the novel is set in colonial period, there are many incidents and episodes which show the development of the characters in the novel. Thus the novel depicts the Dandi March and hunger strike by Mahatma Gandhi. The novel is also a means to present the identity of the modern India to the West. The same views are put forward by Chakrabarti:

“...Indian novelist Shashi Tharoor set out to present a (hi)story of India in the twentieth century from an Indian perspective to his western(ised) readership; and tapped, in the post-Rushdie visibility of the Indian English novel, into the possibility of foregrounding India in his *The Great Indian Novel* (1989)....”
(Chakrabarti)

Ganga Datta is modelled on Gandhi. Gandhi becomes a central character or the hero of the epic without taking a weapon in his hand. Generally, heroes of the epics are depicted doing heroic deeds. They are shown fighting the villain and advocating truth and righteousness.

Gandhi, in this sense, is a unique hero who has different characteristics from the heroes generally found in epics. He does not take up arms and advocates the philosophy of non-violence. There is no woman whose favor he wants to win; rather it is the freedom of his country that he wishes to achieve. The novelist does not ask any muse for divine help or inspiration. The epic is unique in its own fashion.

As far as the plot of the novel is concerned, it is the organization of the sections and chapters of the novel. It very much represents the organization of the original *Mahabharata* and its themes and events. The novel has 18 books just as *The Mahabharata* has 18 books and the battle of Kurushetra also lasted for 18 days. The whole story is divided into 18 books.

The narrator has juxtaposed the events of *The Mahabharata* with the incidents which are happening in Indian politics. Sometimes they get a comparison with the events and sometimes a contrast. There is no doubt that the incidents happening in *The Mahabharata* cannot be completely substituted by those happening on the Indian political scene. He uses the flashback technique to explore the background of some events. He gives some information and then he suddenly switches over to another incident.

He has divided the whole story into different sections. Sometimes the information, stories and facts narrated in them overlap in the mind of the narrator. Tharoor's allusion to different historical personages and events cannot be understood until one has in-depth knowledge of the historical events of the time and their relevance to *The Mahabharata* and the political system of India. Tharoor's treatment of the historical events of *The Mahabharata* and its characters is also ironical sometimes.

The language, tone and style adopted by Shashi Tharoor very much resemble G.V. Desani, Milan Kundera and Salman Rushdie. The author has taken a literary work from the past and recast this old tale in contemporary

times with modern Vyasa – Ganpathi combination. The chief characteristic of this work is that the readers have to be familiar with the original source of the work; otherwise they would miss the significance of the events fictionalized by Tharoor.

The Great Indian Novel is reconstructed on the traditional epic; yet it is a wonderful fusion of myth and history. Great personalities like Nehru, Gandhi, and Subhash Chandra Bose are treated with irreverence by Shashi Tharoor. Tharoor expresses himself through his mouthpiece, the modern Ved Vyasa. He laments the prevailing corrupt political situations in the country's social, political and intellectual circles.

Tharoor's irreverent treatment of the eminent politicians seems to be justified in the wake of the present political set up of the country. It breaks many myths associated with the political personas of the colonial and post colonial time. Tharoor's favorite devices for this purpose are parody and pastiche coupled with irony and satire. Parody is a strong device that plays a vital role in delineating the intended effect. Tharoor has successfully exploited this device of parody. The same technique is more or less used by Salman Rushdie too.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children* and Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* deploy different devices such as the mock-heroic, Victorian poetic style and fantasy as far as the elements of intertextuality are concerned. In *The Great Indian Novel*, there are literary references and cross references. The entire

novel is full of fables, anecdotes and many other literary digressions, very much the characteristics of a true epic.

Both Rushdie's *Midnight Children* and Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* have a postcolonial format. The narrators of both the novels are scriptors, Padma in *Midnight's Children* and Ved Vyasa in *The Great Indian Novel*.

As the novel expands itself in many dimensions, the colonial setting of the novel cannot be overlooked. The novel has the traces of colonialism. The very opening of the novel shows the reaction of an Indian after the independence when the colonial period was over. Their purpose was to exploit the economic resources of India as Ved Vyasa, the narrator, states: "...No. Ganapathi, they came to an India that was fabulously rich and prosperous, they came in search of wealth and profit, and they took what they could take, leaving Indians to wallow in their leavings..." (*The Great Indian Novel*, 95).

In *The Great Indian Novel*, there are many examples which provide a clue to the colonial tyranny. One of them is the description of the poor starving people: "...There was starvation in Motihari, not just because the land did not produce enough for its tillers to eat, but because it could not, under the colonialists' laws, be entirely devoted to keeping them alive..." (50).

The instances of economic colonization of the country can easily be marked by observing the financial situation of the country. Ganga Datta who represents Gandhi was very much depressed at the poor condition of people

under foreign rule: "...He saw children without food, books or toys, snout-nosed little creatures whose distended bellies mocked the emptiness within..." (50).

Tharoor has taken the theme of the British Raj in India and the subjugation and exploitation of the people. The evil design of the British to capture India started since the very beginning of the East India Company which started the economic exploitation of India. They came as missionaries and criticized India's social and religious institutions. They attacked not only the lower section of the society but also middle class and higher class. Sourin Choudhuri argues about the policies of East India Company:

...The educated middle class, being barred from holding high positions, groused. Traders and farmers were hard-hit by the Company's economic policies and commercial dishonesty. To add insult to injury, white missionaries, in their zeal to convert the heathen to Christianity, often spoke ill of Indian social and religious customs...." (Choudhuri, 1)

This quote from Choudhuri's book shows that the British's policy was to rob India. They exploited not only its financial centers but also its religious institutions. It was an attack not only on the people but also on their customs, traditions, beliefs and values.

Tharoor has also taken into consideration the prevalent caste system in Indian society. In the great epic, extensive praise is lavished on the Brahmins

and Kshetriyas. There is no place for the shudras or other castes. Karna was rejected by Draupadi because he was the son of a charioteer though he had successfully lifted the bow and strung the arrow.

Another interesting point that Tharoor has taken up is that polygamy was allowed during that time. Pandu had more than one wife. There is no mention whether this privilege was only available to the kings and high class people or even the common people. It is also quite interesting to note that the husbands can invite other men to have sex with their wives. It was not a custom in Hindu religion. Shvetaketu, the son of the sage Uddalaka, introduced it as a system. Ved Vyasa has written it in *The Mahabharata of Vyasa*, translated by P Lal:

You have heard of the sage Uddalaka. His son Shvetaketu established the institution of marriage. One day, in his father's presence, a Brahmin caught hold of his mother's hands, saying, 'come with me'. Shvetaketu was furious and, though Uddalaka pacified him, he decided to introduce the custom of marriage as we know it now, defying the tradition on doing so...." (Lal, 81)

It also provides a clue to the fact that pre-marital sex as in case of Satyawati and Parashar and extra-marital sex as in case of Pandu was very much legal at that time. It was also a custom of the time that the people would take it as a matter of prestige if they were to get an opportunity to offer their daughters to the Brahmin. Tharoor writes about the Brahmins: "...He would be

offered his host's hospitality, his food, his bed and often, because they were a lot more understanding then, his daughter as well..." (19).

Tharoor's use of irony is remarkable when he allegorizes and juxtaposes the characters of *The Mahabharata* with the freedom fighters of colonial India. They were trying not only to free their country from slavery but also from the caste system and social injustices. *The Mahabharata* tells the story of internal colonialism. A sector of society was privileged to enjoy all the advantages of being born in a high class at the cost of others.

Another striking feature of this novel is Tharoor's occasional use of humour. All the humorous episodes cannot be juxtaposed as far as the modern political India is concerned. The serious treatment of the trivial incident makes the novel more of a mock epic. Tharoor has used humor to provide some kind of comic relief in the novel that abounds in scenes of war and politics. Tharoor has parodied one such incident when Ganga Datta went to attend the First Round Table conference in London. Tharoor has praised Pandu who represents Subhash Chandra Bose at the cost of Ganga Datta:

...He remained so even when Ganga returned, having bared his chest on the newsreels and taken tea in his loincloth with the King-Emperor ('Your Majesty, you are wearing more than enough for the two of us,' the Mahaguru had said disarmingly) but won no concessions from the circular and circumlocutions conferees...." (115)

There is another humorous incident in the novel. Mountbatten who represents Drewpad comes up with his plan. He provides 15th August 1947, as the date to declare India a free nation and withdraw British forces from India. Jinnah, an impatient angry man asked the reason to choose this particular date. He replied that it was the date of his marriage anniversary: “‘It’s my wedding anniversary,’ Drewpad responded innocently” (222).

Another important incident that produces humor is the treatment of the scene when Arjun hurriedly abducts a prostitute, Kameshwari in place of Subhadra. She claims forty rupees for her services if taken: “‘That’ll be forty rupees,’ said a rouged and painted woman, blinking into his face. ‘And my name isn’t Subhadra, it’s Kameswari’” (333).

It is also quite humorous to see Ganga lying naked beside Sarah-behn to test his celibacy. It proves that he doubted his oath. It is also very objectionable from the moral point of view for a saintly figure to lie naked by the side of a woman. Moreover, it also questions the character of the so called lady Sarah-behn who dared to lie naked besides Ganga ji. Another interesting thing to note here is that he did so to get courage to defeat Karna. It is illogical. Medical science has no proof that celibacy could help in defeating another person in a political battle. Modern medical science does not have any answer for these unfounded assumptions. The narrator gives a comic treatment to the incident as Ganga ji states:

...Sarah-behn is like a younger sister to me. But I have asked her to join me in an experiment that will be the ultimate test of my training and self-restraint. She will lie with me, unclad, and cradle me in her arms, and I shall not be aroused. In that non-arousal I hope to satisfy myself that I have remained pure and disciplined...the moral and physical strength that alone will enable me to defeat the evil designs of that man Karna. (228)

The Great Indian Novel as it takes its theme from *The Mahabharata* has many incidents, events and lines which seem to be incredible in the present context. Many of the incidents are incredible for those who do not have a good background reading of *The Mahabharata* and have a skeptical attitude towards supernatural events. Dhritarashtra's desire of having hundred sons may seem credible in ancient India but does not suit the concerns of modern India. It has made him a laughing stock when he states: "'I'm not sure I want a hundred sons,' Dhritarashtra said to his bride. 'But I'd be happy to have half a dozen or so'" (63).

Tharoor has also parodied many important characters from the Independence period. For example, the character of Gandhi has an important role in the independent India. The same was the case even with Ganga Datta in *The Mahabharata*. The juxtaposition of these two characters by Tharoor is very interesting. It brings into light many of the similarities and differences between the two. Like Ganga Datta Gandhi also lived his life for truth. He also

advocated truth and did what his duty was. He knew that Pandavas were on the right path and Kauravas were on the wrong one.

He lived for his words throughout his life as Gandhi followed his principle of non-violence. He had to go to jail many times. He went on hunger strike, but he never broke his promise. Gandhi was a satyagrahi. Gandhi's methods involved suffering and sacrifices. Sourin Choudhuri defines a satyagrahi:

“Gandhian methods involved sufferings and sacrifices. A true ‘satyagrahi’ is a fighter for truth with soul force. He must be prepared to make endless sacrifices in which ‘there is only one-sided suffering that is without killing others one has to die.’”
(Choudhuri, 120)

The hero of Independence was a true believer in non-violence. He never took up weapons against any one. He fought the British army without weapons in his hands. He launched many movements during the independence struggle like Civil disobedience, and non-cooperation. He preferred to end the movement rather than take up arms against the British. Like Ganga Dutta, he never compromised on his principles.

There is no other political leader in the world that resorted to non-violence for fighting an empire except Martin Luther King, the champion of American Negroes. He was the only leader who firmly believed in Gandhian

method of struggle. Being influenced by the theory of Gandhi's non-violence, he advised his supporters to follow the means of non-violence to fight against the brutality of the white. In *How India Won Freedom*, Martin Luther King writes: "...If there is to be blood spilled, it must be our blood"—he said. He was killed by a white Negro-baiter in 1968" (Choudhuri, 123).

Both Ganga Dutta and Gandhi joined politics to bring a change in society. Gandhi has a place in Independent India which Ganga Datta had in Hastinapur. The British were against Gandhi just as there were many kings against Ganga Datta. In the same way, it was difficult for the British to take a stand against the non-violence theory of Gandhi. Gandhi prepared an army of weaponless people to fight against the well armed people.

It is difficult to imagine an India without Gandhi as it is difficult to imagine Hamlet without prince of Denmark; the same is the case with *The Mahabharata*. It would become meaningless if Ganga Datta is no more there.

Tharoor has also parodied Nehru, another important character in modern India. Nehru is represented by Dhritarashtra in the novel. Nehru and Gandhi were close allies in the struggle of freedom. Here Gandhi is different from Ganga Datta. Ganga Datta knew that Dhritarashtra was blind not only in his eyes but also in his approach and policies. The hero of our independence was different from the one of the real *Mahabharata*. Gandhi unconditionally supported Nehru. He never held any other congress man in such high esteem as Pandit Nehru. Madhav Godbole writes and also quotes Gandhi in his book *The*

Holocaust of Indian Partition: "...Your real king is Jawaharlal", "our uncrowned king is Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru", "He is transparent as crystal He has made me captive of his love. That is why I have proclaimed from the housetops that I am Pandit Nehru's and (as an afterthought) the Sardar's prisoner" (Godbole, pp 253-254).

Pandu who represents Subhash Chandra Bose was familiar with these politics of the Congress party. The Ganga Datta of *The Mahabharata* is different from the Gandhi of the Independence struggle. He did not underestimate Pandu and was aware of the jealousy of Dhritarashtra. He was never a maker of the policies of Dhritarashtra rather he was merely an adviser. In case of the Independence struggle, Gandhi was the maker of the policies and Nehru implemented them. Pandu of *The Mahabharata* was passing through the same mental anguish as Subhash Chandra Bose of the Independent India. Ved Vyasa states:

I myself caught a whiff of Pandu's bitterness at a working committee meeting of the party which I happened to attend. At one point I was talking to Dhritarashtra and the skeletal Ganga ji when Pandu walked palely past. 'The Kaurava Trinity,' he muttered audibly for my benefit-'the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost'. (113)

Gandhi was killed for his philosophy of Truth. His Truth was not accepted by Nathu Ram Godse, a Hindu fanatic who killed Gandhi. This

character is represented by Shikkhanand, Amba who kills Ganga ji for his revenge. But in case of Nathu Ram Godse, there was no revenge of honour rather it was the result of growing religious fanaticism and intolerance. Gandhi was afraid of growing fanaticism and intolerance. He had taken a fast to keep it to an end, but he had to pay the price by sacrificing his life. His last words before his death were, “‘I...have...failed,’ he whispered” (234).

He died and the whole country sank into darkness again. Even Nehru was very much shocked at the death of Gandhi. The words that came out of Nehru’s mouth were: “And then he was gone, and the light, as Dhritarashtra was to say, went out of our lives” (234).

Tharoor has treated the character of Sarah-behn very positively. She is British, but works for the welfare of the Indians. Sarah-behn represents Annie Besant who was a famous English social worker. She had worked for the welfare of the underdogs and downtrodden people. She came to India with the purpose of helping the poor Indians who were direct victims of social, financial and cultural exploitation at the hands of the British.

Tharoor has also parodied the character of Mohammad Ali Jinnah whose description is very interesting and funny. His career starts with Kaurava party known as the Congress party. He soon departs and forms his own party by the name of All India Muslim League. He is the son of Kunti Devi by Hyperion Helios who is a Hindu God but he represents Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the moving spirit behind Pakistan.

He resigns from the Kaurava party because of too much influence of Gandhi and Nehru. He joins the Muslim League. The more amusing trait of his personality is that he was an agnostic and had nothing to do with religious orthodoxy.

Tharoor has admired Mohammad Ali Jinnah. His character is surrounded in charm of mystery. Tharoor has unabashed praise of his talent. His personality is described as an epic hero, a warrior, a brave man, an archer etc. Tharoor writes about him:

...It was said he had all the skills of a classical warrior: some claimed he practiced archery in the garden, and could shoot a single mango from a cluster without disturbing the others in the bunch; others spoke of his prowess at riding, recounting how one look from those blazing eyes could quell the most insubordinate of horses at the Mahalakshmi stables....” (pp 136-137)

Madhav Godbole has quoted Wavell in his book, when he has written in a letter to the king on 8th July 1946 about Jinnah: “I have much sympathy with Jinnah, who is straighter, more positive and sincere than most of the Congress leaders....He is a curious character, a lonely, unhappy, arbitrary, self-centred man, fighting with much resolution what I fear is a losing battle” (Godbole, 265).

Karna has more the characteristics of an English man rather than a Muslim or an Indian. The narrator has rightly expressed his doubts about how an irreligious man like Karna could be the source of partition on the basis of religion. Tharoor has given a very ironic treatment to his personality: "...He disdained the mullahs and disregarded their prohibitions...Far from praying five times a day, he prided himself on his scientific, and therefore agnostic, cast of mind..." (142).

Jinnah's attachment with Islam is seen with suspicion as he was very close even to the heart of the Hindus. He was a champion of the Hindu-Muslim unity that gave him popularity. With the rise of Gandhi, Jinnah found himself overshadowed. He began to seek to get his strength by associating himself with anti-Gandhi forces. Rafiq Zakaria gives an account of Jinnah in his book, *The Man Who Divided India*:

... At first he aligned himself with the Hindus and worked incessantly for Hindu-Muslim unity...Later, with advent of Gandhi, the political environment changed and Jinnah was sidelined as a result of his aversion to mass agitation; he then concentrated all his energy in rebuilding his leadership by associating with the anti-Gandhi forces...." (Zakaria, pp 219-220)

Jinnah found Gandhi communal as he believed in politics based on religion. Jinnah's leaving the Congress party was because of Gandhi's politics. It made him particularly conscious about the representation of the Muslims,

and he formed the Muslim league. His feelings of insecurity led him form a party that was to represent the Muslims at large. He believed that the Congress was no longer secular. The narrator states: “In other words, Karna found the Kauravas under Ganga ji insufficiently secular, and this made him, paradoxically, more consciously Muslim...” (142).

Jinnah wished to lead the party. He did not like the monopoly of Gandhi on the Congress. Jinnah’s decision to join the Muslim League was to dominate the affairs of the Muslim League. He wanted to direct everything. Jinnah gave the Muslim League a strong leadership.

It is difficult to determine whether Jinnah had really turned communal or if hatred against Hindus was one of his political weapons. There have been instances when Jinnah had been very conservative. Montgomery describes Jinnah during his short visit to India in the last week of June 1947:

“Jinnah was totally different (than Nehru). He was keyed up to a high state of tension; he openly expressed his deadly hatred of the Hindus, saying he would have nothing to do with them...He expressed his intense distrust of Auchinleck, and his hatred of Mountbatten who, he said, was in “the pocket” of Nehru.”
(Godbole, 267)

Zaidi argues that the same Jinnah had refused the request to autograph the story, “Mohammad Ali Jinnah: His Moslem Tiger wants to eat the Hindu

Cow". Jinnah explained to the editor: "Since the caption was offensive to the sentiments of the Hindu community, I cannot put my autograph on the cover page...as requested by you." ... But the same Jinnah candidly stated in 1948: "If I hadn't been a fanatic there would never have been Pakistan" (Godbole, 268).

Tharoor has also dealt with the episodes of partition in *The Great Indian Novel*. He has juxtaposed many historical incidents which led to partition. The then leaders considered partition a permanent solution to the temporary problem of communalism. Two men, Jinnah and Nehru, changed the course of Indian history. M. Raza Khan quotes Leonard Mosley in *What Price Freedom*:

The encounter between the two leaders lasted for eighty minutes. but encounter was what it was, and not a meeting of minds. It would be less than just to Nehru to say that he did not try. He may have had his own ideas of how independent India should be run, but there is no doubt of his desperate eagerness to achieve it...Jinnah was polite but unyielding.... (Raza, pp 175-176)

Tharoor tries to assert that the two leaders fought more for their egos than for the welfare of nation. It was their likes and dislikes which decided the future of these two nations. They decided the destiny of many people. It was the same event in *The Mahabharata* where the ego of Duryodhana and the

mental blindness of Dhritarashtra had put people at war. If there had not been the ego of Duryodhana, there would never have been a great war.

Tharoor also throws light on The Indian National Congress, the political party of the time. The Congress party had been in existence for a long time before our national heroes like Nehru, Gandhi, Subhash and Patel came to the forefront. It had not struggled as sincerely for the Independence of India before.

These leaders gave the Party new direction and a real spirit of nationhood. These leaders not only made this party of national importance, but also won the faith and confidence of the people. Gandhi's selfless service gave party a new identity and recognition. Nehru lavishes praise on Gandhi in his book, *The Discovery of India*: "Gandhi for the first time entered the Congress organization and immediately brought about a complete change in its constitution. He made it democratic and a mass organization...." (Nehru, 360)

There are also various communal incidents that Tharoor has represented in the novel. They also find their parallel in the history of India. One of these remarkable incidents is the Direct Action by Jinnah and the communal riots which broke out in Calcutta as a result. The Congress blamed Jinnah for the Direct Action. The people associated with the League had a different view on the subject. Rafiq Zakaria has quoted Wavell in his book, *The Man Who Divided India*:

...He told Gandhi and Nehru bluntly in his meeting with them on August 27, 1946 that their attitude towards the League had not been fair. Had they unreservedly accepted the provision of “grouping of provinces”, he was confident the league would not have taken the step it did....” (Zakaria, pp 122-123)

Gandhi was much disturbed because of the communal disharmony. He came out to give the message of peace. Nobody was willing to listen to him. He vainly kept on walking from place to place. The narrator seems to be well familiar with the historical intricacies of India during the Independence. He has very carefully organized all the minute details related to the struggle. Despite strong criticism of Gandhi, Tharoor has also glorified his role at several places of importance as he describes it here: “Ganga ji refused to be reconciled to the new reality. He walked in vain from riot-spot to riot-spot, trying to put out the conflagration through expressions of reason and grief...” (211).

It is also prejudicial to blame Jinnah completely for the partition. It was the British Government which introduced Reforms Bill and made separate constituencies for the Muslims and the Hindus. The seeds of this divide and rule were sowed by the British. Hindus and Muslims were simply their victims.

There were many Muslims in the Congress who were against the partition. They feared that it would make them a minority in India. Mountbatten came with the plan of the partition. The plan detailed how the two

nations were to come in existence. Sourin Choudhri writes about the plan presented by Mountbatten in his book:

On June 2, 1947 Mountbatten unfolded his plan to a gathering of seven persons—Nehru, Patel and Kriplani representing the Congress; Jinnah, Liaqat Ali and Nister representing the Muslim League; and Baldev Singh representing two per cent of India's population, the Sikhs. The plan was—the subcontinent would be divided into two independent States—India and Pakistan. Pakistan would be a double-winged state, composed of Muslim-majority provinces and areas, namely, Sind, Baluchistan, North-West Frontier and about half of Punjab in the west, and two-thirds of Bengal in the east. The princely states would have to join either India or Pakistan—no independence which some of them had aspired to.” (Choudhri, pp 139-140)

The partition took place, but the communal riots did not stop. In fact, now they emerged on a bigger scale. Hundreds of people lost their lives. India fell apart. The whole country was soaked in blood.

Freedom came to the nation, but it brought joy to no one. The partition led to a heavy deficit of trust between the two big communities and that still continues. The Hindus are a minority in Pakistan and the Muslims are a minority in India. Both the communities live in fear. It gets its expression in the

communal riots that often erupt in both the countries. There is a view that Rafiq Zakaria writes in his book, *The Man Who Divided India*:

There is no denying the fact that a large number of Hindus and Muslims of South Asia have gone through hell in the last more than fifty years; the historic blunder that the leadership committed in agreeing to partition has left behind the baggage of hatred and ill-will which has irretrievably entrapped them....”
(Zakaria, 239)

Gandhi was truly the hero of the nation. He went for another fast just within six months of India's Independence. This time he did not keep fast against the British but against his own government to pay 550 million rupees to Pakistan under an agreement. He began his fast on January 13, 1948 to compel the Indian government to pay Pakistan her due. Sourin Choudhri writes about it in his book, *How India Won Freedom*: “...He took it so seriously that he, on January 13, 1948, undertook a fast unto death or till India government paid Pakistan her dues. That would not be all. He would be fasting till communal enmity was totally banished from India” (Choudhri, 145).

As mentioned earlier, Pandu is one of the most important characters in *The Mahabharata*. Pandu is juxtaposed with a great patriot of India. Subhash Chandra Bose. He went to Germany and formed Azad Hind Fauj. He did not believe much in Gandhian philosophy of non-violence.

It was Subhash Chandra Bose who considered military power to be the essential means to defeat the British. Bose spent some part of his life in Germany preparing an army against the British. In this novel, it is described in the form of Pandu's meditation in the forest. He took help of Axis powers in establishing the Indian National Army. Subhash Chandra Bose did much for the freedom of the country yet Gandhi is considered the undisputable hero of the Independent India.

The novel has presented a contrast between Dhritarashtra and Pandu. It reminds one of the conflicts between Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose. Subhash was also marginalized by the Congress as was Pandu in the Kaurava party. There have always been differences between the two. Nehru was more in the dream world than Subhash who was more practical in his approach.

Subhash Chandra Bose also worked hard for the freedom of the country, but his efforts are underestimated. When the history of post-colonial India was written, Subhash Chandra Bose did not get his proper place. It was the same with poor Pandu who was also marginalized in the politics of Hastinapur. Tharoor writes:

...When, years later, Duryodhani spoke darkly of the immense and unrivalled sacrifices her father and she made for the nation...calloused Pandu with the smell of sweat on his brow and the dust of India on his sandals. And I would muse, Ganpathi, on the injustice of Fate. (112)

Bose did not believe in the policies of Congress. He stepped out to form the national army of India. Madhav Godbole has quoted Wavell about Nehru and Congress in his book, *The Holocaust of Indian Partition*:

“I look at the immediate future of India from the practical point of view, while you seem to be entirely sentimental....I feel depressed and disappointed... at what seems to me a complete lack of reality in the Congress attitude. To be frank, they seem to me to be thinking much more of party politics and party advantage, than of the good of India as a whole.” (Godbole, 253)

Pandu, despite being given secondary importance, never lost the courage or felt inferior to Ganga and Dhritarashtra. The incidents of Jalianwala Bagh had wounded many people. They were crying because of the cruelties of the British rule. It suddenly made Pandu a hero. He had understood the fact that the policy of non-violence was not going to help India. His rebellious attitude found a reflection even in his activities when he announced his presidency for the Kaurava party at the annual session. He made people realize that the policy of inaction was not going to do any good. He said ““Time for a change. Need for renewal in the party. New ideas about the direction of the movement. His slogan is “A Time for Action”. People are listening to him””. (166)

Pandu’s policies of action gained people’s support. They were really bored with the policies of Ganga ji. The narrator of *The Great Indian Novel* is also afraid of Pandu’s active participation in the politics. He feared that it

would lose ground for Gandhi: "...The excitement of his supporters at Pandu's election posed a threat that could not be allowed to grow. From the expression on the faces of the others it was clear to me that Pandu's presidency would destroy either the party or him." (172)

The same incident happened in the Independence struggle of India's freedom when Subhash Chandra Bose was elected the president of the Congress party. Subhash Chandra Bose, like Pandu, also defeated Gandhi's nominee two times in the election of the Presidency of the party.

Another important character that Tharoor has fictionalized is that of Draupadi. Draupadi symbolizes Democracy. She was born out of the illegitimate affair between Nehru and Edwina Mountbatten, the wife of Lord Mountbatten. Democracy in India was an amalgam of East and West as Draupadi was a symbol of the union of an Indian father and Western mother. After this illegitimate daughter was born, Nehru could never adopt her and care for her. The same was happening to democracy in India. Its legacy could not be maintained after Independence. The emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi is its best example when the Institutions of democracy were attacked by the Nehru family. The idea of democracy in India proved to be like an illegitimate child that was always exploited by a handful of people for their own interest. Draupadi proved itself to be a superb metaphor for democracy in India.

The Great Indian Novel presents an image of women very much subjugated by men. Gandhari had been an ideal wife but had no representation

and saying in political affairs. She represents Kamla, the wife of Nehru. Kamla was totally different from the one presented in the novel. Kamla was not a dependant woman; rather she came forward in the national struggle of India for Independence. She never desired to be a shadow of her husband. Nehru writes about his wife in *The Discovery of India*:

...She wanted to play her own part in the national struggle and not be merely a hanger-on and a shadow of her husband. She wanted to justify herself to her own self as well as to the world. Nothing in the world could have pleased me more than this, but I was far too busy to see beneath the surface, and I was blind to what she looked for and so ardently desired.... (Nehru, 41)

Here the case was opposite. Nehru was blind to see the real strength and enthusiasm of his wife. She was not very educated, but had a strong desire to serve the nation. The Independence struggle provided women with a new identity. Their participation in the freedom struggle gave them a new recognition. It was also symbolic of the fact that the Indian women were trying to free themselves from the subjugation of men. Nehru throws light on the struggle of Indian women for Independence in his well known book, *The Discovery of India*: "...Our women came to the front and took charge of the struggle. Women had always been there of course, but now there was an avalanche of them, which took not only the British Government but their own men folk by surprise...." (Nehru, 41)

The women of *The Mahabharata* times had sympathy for their men but no identity of their own. They wished to be known in respect to their men. They were not aware of their own identity. Gandhari, the wife of Dhritarashtra was not so prepared to take up arms for welfare of the nation.

Tharoor has portrayed the character of Indira Gandhi very negatively. Her character is represented by Priya Duryodhani in the novel. She has done much harm to the five Pandavas who represent the five main pillar institutions of the country. The narrator here points toward the emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi that proved her to be a dictator. Tharoor makes Nehru responsible for the acts of Indira Gandhi. India would have been different if Nehru had kept the issues of national importance in his own hands:

Perhaps things might have been different had Dhritarashtra taken her in hand, rather than his pen. But he did not, and there is no point in speculating about what might have happened if he had. History, after all, is full of ifs and buts. I prefer, Ganapathi, to seek other conjunctions with destiny. (155)

Duryodhana's act of giving poison to Bhim represents Indira Gandhi's effort to dominate and exploit the Indian army. She was a cunning politician like Duryodhana. Duryodhana was very shrewd from childhood and did not believe anybody. The same traits are noticed even in the character of Indira Gandhi. Tharoor writes: "...After what she saw in her childhood Priya

Duryodhāni would never be able to trust another human being, no, not even- especially not-her own father” (152).

Some people allege that with Indira Gandhi's role as the Prime Minister of India, the era of dynasty politics would begin. The Congressmen's choice for Indira Gandhi was not homage to the sincerity and loyalty of Nehru. It was a way out to continue their own politics as they considered Indira Gandhi to be a dummy doll. Surendra Roy has described the disunity among the Syndicate on the prime ministership of Morarji Desai, a man of great ability and high principles. He was not, of course, their choice because of his honesty. Roy states:

...some Congress men of Syndicate wanted a 'docile dummy' who might act as Rubber Stamp for Prime Ministership. Mrs. Gandhi was most appropriate for this post because she was a commutate Gungi Gudia (a dumb doll) at that time. Consequently, the opinion made most towards Indira Gandhi in place of Morarji Desai.... (Roy 27)

Indira Gandhi was sworn in as the Prime Minister of India. On the other hand, the institutions of democracy were being strengthened with the passage of time. Democracy was married to five Pandavas, the five husbands who represent the protectors of the democracy. Democracy was primarily married to Arjun. It had four more husbands who represent the four important pillars on which democracy stands. Arjun represents Indian news media, Bhim represents

Indian army, Yudhishtir represents Indian Judiciary, Nakul represents the Civil Service and Sahdev represents the Foreign Service. Arjun's roaming around symbolizes the active movements of the Indian news media all over India.

Indira Gandhi retained the office for one year after the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri. Then there had to be an election. Indira Gandhi's party won the position at the centre, but had a big shock in the state constituencies. It was the first time since Partition that the Congress Party had suffered such a defeat. The narrator describes the scene after the election to bring a sharp contrast between *The Mahabharata* and Independent India. In *The Mahabharata*, dynasty ruled whereas in the Independent India, dynasty rule had received a big shock and democracy had shown its strength:

...We should not have been surprised at what happened, but we were: though the Kaurava party retained power thanks to the absence of any real alternative, we lost seats all over the country to a motley array of oppositions groups. In half a dozen states non-kaurava majorities had a chance to form governments, something which had not occurred since Karna took his Muslim Group out of the country.... (339)

The novel takes into account how the defeat of the Congress Party raises serious reconsideration. The big leaders of the party associate the defeat with Indira Gandhi. The defeat results into hot argument between Indira Gandhi and Morarji Desai who is represented by Yudhishtir in the novel. There arose

internal differences in the party which posed a more serious threat. Many times the narrator sounds these differences:

‘What are you saying, Yudhishtir?’ I was frankly aghast. ‘Are you now to parade our internal differences before the world? Democracy, as you put it, if carried too far in the wrong places, can only jeopardize democracy where it ought to exist... A political party is like a family, Yudhishtir. A family does not decide in the street who will cook its dinner tonight.’ (340)

Another important political incident that Tharoor has fictionalized in the novel is the nationalization of banks. He does not provide the exact date of the event while Bipan Chandra gives an insight into the history and provides an exact date of the nationalization of the banks. The narrator parodies many events and persons in the novel. He does not provide any factual and fictional date in the novel. Bipan Chandra mentions the date in his book, *India Since Independence*: “...Assuming the finance portfolio herself, Indira Gandhi immediately, on 21 July, announced the nationalization of fourteen major banks through a presidential ordinance...” (Chandra 298).

Another incident of extreme historical importance that the novelist has dealt with in the novel is the freedom of Bangladesh from Pakistan. East Pakistan was a Bengali dominated area while the West Pakistan was a Punjabi dominating area. Both of them had their roots in different cultures. The narrator

has juxtaposed the same situation of Karnistan in the novel which was almost the same with West Pakistan and East Pakistan at that time:

They voted overwhelmingly for the Gelabin People's Party, which won all but one seat in East Karnistan and thus, by share arithmetic, a numerical majority in the Karnistan Parliament...Zalil Shah Jhoota a prococious autocrat who had managed to convince a majority of West Karnistani voters that he was really a precocious socialist—that they persuaded Jarasandha Khan to declare the election results null and void, declare martial law in the East and lock up all the Gelabin politicians, the Karnistani army could lay their hands and batons on. The few who escaped incarceration promptly reacted by declaring the secession of Gelabin Desh from Karnistan. (354)

Tharoor has parodied some characters and the places here. Gelabin People's Party stands for East Pakistan(now Bangladesh)'s Awami Party, East Karnistan stands for East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Zalil Shah Jhoota stands for Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Jarasandha Khan stands for Yahiya Khan. India helped freedom fighters of Bangladesh and as a result Bangladesh got freedom from Pakistan.

Indira Gandhi was very much encouraged by this victory. Bipan Chandra has quoted Indira Gandhi's interview on BBC, in his book, *India since Independence*: “We are not dependent upon what other countries think or want

us to do. We know what we want for ourselves and we are going to do it, whatever it costs...we welcome help from any other country; but if it doesn't come, well, it is all right by us''' (Chandra, 305).

Tharoor has also juxtaposed the worst political crisis since India's independence in 1975, when Internal Emergency was imposed in the country on 26 June. The same event in the history of Modern India reminds the readers of the events in Hastinapur of *The Mahabharata* when Drona keeps fast until death for the social and political justice:

...In Hastinapur, after weeks of popular agitation culminating in a highly popular march by housewives banging empty pots and pans outside his residence...preferring to control Hastinapur directly under 'President's Rule'—Yudhishtir, the state's famous political leader, undertook a fast unto death...The political tide seemed to be turning decisively away from the Prime Minister. (364)

Jayaprakash Narayan, a former freedom fighter, leader of the Janta Party is represented as Jayaprakash Drona. He opposed the rule of Indira Gandhi. One important similarity between Drona and Jayaprakash Narayan is that both of them were experts in their fields. Drona was expert in the art of archery while Jayaprakash Narayana was an expert in art of politics. He came out to defend and strengthen the institutions of democracy which were being ignored

by Indira Gandhi. The narrator fictionalizes a character from *The Mahabharata* who more or less presents the picture of Jayaprakash Narayana in the novel:

At last the people rose. Or, as always in India, some of the people rose, led by an unlikely figure who had stepped from the pages—so it almost seemed—of the history books. Jayaprakash Drona emerged from his retreat and called for a People's Uprising against Priya Duryodhani. (361)

The narrator also points out towards the JP movement in the novel which was led and supported by Drona. It got nationwide acclaim and support especially from the students, middle classes, traders and a section of the intelligentsia. The movement was also supported by almost all the non-left political parties which had been trounced in 1971. They found a popular leader emerging in JP. These parties believed he would enable them to acquire credibility as an alternative to Congress. The narrator has given an insight into this movement:

Drona's uprising was, of course, a peaceful one, so it was not really an uprising but a mass movement. It was, however, a movement that rapidly caught the imagination of the people and ignited that of the opposition. Drona preached not only against ...the whole monopoly of national evils, including the very ones against which the Prime Minister had campaigned in the election.... (363)

The narrator has also mentioned the internal emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi. Censorship on the press was imposed, too, under the Rule of 48 of the Defence and Maintenance of Internal Security of India Act of 1971. The newspapers were not allowed to publish inter-alia reports which affected India's relations with foreign powers. The newly appointed Information and Broadcast minister, Vidya Charan Shukla, warned all foreign correspondents in New Delhi that they were subject to expulsion from the country if they failed to submit their dispatches and broadcast script for censorship. Democracy was shattered during the period of Indira Gandhi, and political unrest in the country would lead to total anarchy. Tharoor also writes about emergency in *The Hindu*:

During the two inglorious years preceding the Emergency, the country had seemed on the verge of a catastrophe. Prices, unemployment and corruption rose; her standing in the nation fell. Mounting protests, led by the saintly Jayaprakash Narayan, brought down one Congress State Government (in Gujarat) and threatened others. As anarchy loomed, her judicial conviction, even on a technicality, seemed to leave Indira Gandhi no option but to resign in disgrace.

Morarji Desai became the Prime Minister after Indira Gandhi's regime came to an end. The ruling parties now decided that Indira Gandhi should be taken to the court and face a law suit for her actions during her emergency

regime. She was accused of making unnecessary amendments in the constitution. The then ruling parties tried to restore those rights again.

The narrator also describes the episode of Indira Gandhi being trialed by the court for making the changes in the basic form of the constitution. The same was happening in Pakistan as well. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was put in prison and hanged for the illegal activities during his regime. Indira Gandhi was also facing the same charges though in a modest way. She had to face the legal trials. The narrator makes an ironic commentary on the judiciary of India and asserted that the law could not do any harm to the people in high offices:

...Since everyone who had lived in India for the last three years with his eyes open knew she had subverted the constitution, it did not seem to be a charge that required much proof. Yet the chosen means did not serve the choicest ends: the lawcourts, Ganpathi, with the solitary recent exception of post-Falklands Argentina, are not the place for a people to bring their former rulers to account.... (405)

Tharoor has also described the second attack of Pakistan on India when Lal Bahadur Shastri was the Prime Minister. Pakistan was once again looking for an opportunity to launch a fresh attack on India as Pakistan had seen the outcome of Indo-China war:

...The Karnistanis, too, saw the haze of transience around his eyes. They began their preparations soon after he had unassumingly assumed office, and seized the first tactical opportunity to make their second grab for Manimir. (317)

In 1948, the main issue of Indo-Pak war was Jammu and Kashmir. The main cause of this second war between India and Pakistan was the 'Rann of Kachchh' which is a marshy place between the Sindh provincial border and the former Kathiwar states. Now, it is under the possession of India. Pakistan claimed that the Rann was an arm of the sea and consequently the frontier should be drawn in its centre. But India, accepting the old border line between Sindh and Kathiwar states, held that it had been the international frontier since 1917. Their dispute led to the war.

The rule of Shishu Pal had many challenges before it. But India's defence system had become stronger by that time and the Indian army paid Pakistan in the same coin:

But, like everyone else, the Karnistanis had underestimated Shishu Pal. He prayed from dusk till dawn, then gave the order for counter-attack. Our army had learned its lessons from the Chakra humiliation, and hits back so hard that our troops were just seven kilometers from Karnistan's most populous city, Laslut, when another cease-fire intervened. (The story of the

Subcontinent's recent wars, Ganpathi, is that of politicians shouting both 'Fire!' and 'Cease!' at the wrong times.) (317)

When India was dealing with the attack of Pakistan, China was planning to attack on India from the other side. China accused Indian forces of stealing yaks and sheep. An ultimatum was issued to India to return the yaks and sheep. Shastri proved to be very able Prime Minister. He was ready even to counter any attack from China even if it happened.

Shastri had no doubt done a wonderful job this time. He had made Pakistan realize the military power of India. Nehru failed on this front while Shastri took very practical steps during this war time. Surendra has lavished his praise on Shastri and compared him to American President Woodrow Wilson though it seems to be a little bit of exaggeration:

...Again, it was Mr. Shastri who tactfully dealt with Indo-Pak war of 1965. He adopted centrist policy in that war and took out his countrymen whatsoever from the quagmire of above war as Woodrow Wilson; American President had got the world spared from the First World War in 1918...." (Roy, 24)

After the war, the famous Tashkand Conference was held on January 4 - 10, 1966 with the efforts of Britain, United Nations and Russia. Russian Prime Minister Kosygin presided in it. Shastri represented India in this Conference. This conference agreed to provide the peaceful settlement of future disputes.

Under that declaration, the Haji Pir was evacuated without a no war pact or abandonment of guerilla activity.

The narrator has also described the victory of the Janta Party and its celebration in an Indian way. The celebration of the victory of the election is like a national festival in the country: “‘Janata Front! Somebody shouted. ‘Zindabad!’ Came the answering roar: ‘Janata Front, Zindabad! The chant picked up the variety, and rhythm. ‘Drona Zindabad! Yudhishtir, Zindabad! Janta Front, Zindabad!’” (402)

The narrator has also described the episode how Morarji became the Prime Minister after a lot of struggle. There were three candidates eligible for the premiership being the senior most members of the party. Morarji Desai had been denied the seat many times in the past. Jayaprakash Narayan and J.B. Kriplani, the senior leaders of the party decided in favor of Morarji Desai. The same episode is also described in the Indian history by Bipan Chandra:

There was a near-crisis over the issue of prime ministership between the three aspirants, Morarji Desai, Charan Singh and Jagjivan Ram. The matter was referred to the senior leaders, Jayaprakash Narayana and J.B. Kriplani, who ruled in favour of the 81-year-old Desai, who was sworn as prime minister on 23 March. (Chandra, 332)

The Great Indian Novel is truly the epic of the nation. It contains the history of almost a century. The political figures of national and international importance make this epic a worth reading. The epic cannot be dissociated from the ancient past of India. It has rich elements of mythology. The novel also states the political development of postcolonial India. The novel is also a political satire as it satirizes the key political figures and institutions. Gandhi is truly the hero of this epic. He is also the father of the nation without whom this epic would have been incomplete. Tharoor has defamiliarized many of the political figures and incidents of colonial and postcolonial India. The novel is a wonderful blend of history, myth and fantasy.

Works cited

- Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th ed. Bangalore: Heinle, 1999.
- Alexander, Horace. *Gandhi Through Western Eyes*. Bombay: Jayasinghe. 1969.
- Bhalla, Alok. *Partition Dialogues*. New Delhi: Oxford. 2006.
- Bhattacharya, Pradip. "The Great Indian Novel by Shashi Tharoor." spydistrict 18 Jul 2004. 10 Jul 2011. <<http://www.spydistrict.com/2011/05/great-indian-novel-by-shashi-tharoor.html>>
- Birdwood, C.B. *India's Freedom Struggle*. Delhi: Discovery. 1988.
- Brecher, Michael. *Succession in India: A study in decision-making*. Bombay: OUP. 1966.
- Chakrabarti, Merivirta. "Reclaiming India's History – Myth, History and Historiography in Shashi Tharoor's The Great Indian Novel." 09 Sep 2007. 10 Jul 2011. <<http://www.ennenjanyt.net/?p=89>>
- Chandra, Bipan. *India Since Independence*. New Delhi: Penguin. 2008.
- Chandra, Bipan. *India's Struggle for Independence*. New Delhi: Penguin. 1987.
- Chandra, Bipan. *Modern India*. New Delhi: NCERT. 1971.
- Chaudhary, Sourin. *How India won Freedom*. New Delhi: S. Chand and Co. 1987.
- Godbole, Madhav. *The Holocaust of Indian Partition: An Inquest*. New Delhi: Rupa. 2006.
- Khan, Mohamed Raza. *What Price Freedom*. Madras: Nuri. 1969.
- Kumar, Nanda. "Multiplicity of Voices in the novels of Shashi Tharoor" 9 Oct 2007. 10 May 2011 <<http://nandantk.blogspot.com/2007/10/multiplicity-of-voices-in-novels-of.html>>
- Lal, P., tr. *The Mahbharata of Ved Vyasa*. New Delhi: Vikas publishing house private limited, 1980.
- Mackenzie, Donald A. *India: Myths and Legend Series*. London: Greesham. 1985.

- Marston, Daniel P. and Chandar S. Sundaram. *A Military History of India and South Asia: From East India Company to the Nuclear Era*. New Delhi: Pentagon. 2008.
- Nehru, Jawahar Lal. *The Discovery of India*. New Delhi: JL Nehru Memorial Fund. 1981.
- Roy, Surendra. *The Independent India: A Political Glimpse 1947-2000*. Samastipur: ????, ????.
- Seervai, H.M. *Partition of India: Legend and Reality*. Bombay: Emmenem. 1989.
- Tharoor, Shashi. "I don't take critics seriously." *Vivacity*. 02 Jun 2011. 10 Jul 2011. <<http://www.dailypioneer.com/337239/%E2%80%98I-don%E2%80%99t-take-critics-seriously%E2%80%99.html>>
- . "Master of Satire." 2004. 20 May 2011. <<http://tharoor.in/press/master-of-satire/>>
- . "Striking back with the Emergency ... Indira Gandhi." *Experiment with Autocracy*. 14 Apr 2002. 10 Jul 2011. <<http://www.hinduonnet.com/mag/2002/04/14/stories/2002041400120300.htm>>
- . *The Great India Novel*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1988. (All the references to this chapter have been indicated by page number only.)
- Willis, Roy, ed. *World Mythology*. London: General Editor Duncan Baird Publishers Ltd, 2006.
- Zakaria, Rafiq. *The Man who Divided India: An insight into Jinnah's leadership and its aftermath*. Mumbai. Popular. 2002.

CHAPTER 3

Representing Contemporary History of India: *Riot* as a Polyphonic Novel

The present chapter explores Tharoor's *Riot* as a polyphonic novel. The theory of polyphony includes the presence or use of different voices which cannot be treated as one voice. Bakhtin challenged the traditional view of the novel as monologic and proved that the nature of the novel is not monologic but polyphonic.

Bakhtin believes that novel as a form is dialogical or heteroglot. He borrowed the concept of polyphony from music and expanded it for literary theory and criticism. In music, polyphony stands for a piece that has more than one voice, melody or theme. These different components, like melody, voice and theme, have an equal importance though different from each other in nature. Like music, the novel too has different voices which are equally important and cannot merge with each other. The absence of any of them may distort the form and charm of the novel.

The polyphonic novel provides enough ground to take different perspectives into account other than the perspectives of the novelist. The origin of polyphony is in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, the text where Bakhtin drew a distinction between 'monologic' and 'polyphonic'.

Riot can also be seen as a historiographic metafiction or post modernist fiction as there are many intertextual references and allusions in the novel. Nanda Kumar in an article titled “Multiplicity of Voices in the novels of Shashi Tharoor” comments: “In short, with its intertextual references and allusions, with its sophisticated awareness of its own reflexivity, *Riot* is quite in tune with much of the metafictional writings of today” (Kumar). Another critic, Paras Dhir, says: “Nonetheless, taking history as its base, Tharoor revisits the past with objectivity and irony, and transforms it into historiographic metafiction which problematizes history by presenting historical incidents and characters....” (Dhir)

Tharoor’s *Riot* is a wonderful example of a polyphonic novel in which the author, the protagonist, the narrator, other characters, the reader, and even voices outside the text contribute to each other to create an effect of polyphony in the novel. There are different voices outside the text too which participate in the polyphonic novel. These outside forces are the cultural, historical and religious contexts that cannot be separated from the novel and help to explore multiple and co-existing modes of representation.

Polyphony includes the plurality of speech. It operates not only with the transcribed dialogues among the characters but also the implicit voices of the characters i.e. the thoughts and consciousness of the different characters. It also includes the implicit and explicit voices of the novelist and even the voices of the readers. The readers engage in dialogue with the text and communicate

with it. The reader is also a very important voice that Bakhtin has taken into account as he is the most active voice responding to the text.

In order to achieve the effect of polyphony in his novel, Tharoor has used different voices with the help of newspaper articles, report writing, letters, diary entries, radio scripts, interview transcripts, scrap book entries, self-composed poetry and journal extracts. Tharoor himself has commented on the form of the novel in *The Hindu*. He believes that this novel is written in a different form from his other novels:

And *Riot* is also a departure for me fictionally, because unlike my earlier novels it is not a satirical work. Like the other two, though, it takes liberties with the fictional form. I have always believed that the very word "novel" implies that there must be something "new" about each one. What was new to me about the way *Riot* unfolded was that I told the story through newspaper clippings, diary entries, interviews, transcripts, journals, scrapbooks, even poems written by the characters - in other words, using different voices, different stylistic forms, for different fragments of the story. (Tharoor)

Paras Dhir has commented on the form and style of the novel: "While writing novel as history, Shashi Tharoor is no different from a journalist. He uses journalistic reporting, diary writing, and interviews to depict reality from a multiple point of view that concerns his novel...." (Dhir)

The novel has rich elements of heteroglossia too. This heteroglossia presents the form in which different dialogues are presented. Bakhtin names it the social diversity of speech types that he discovered in the novel. The nature of the form of the *Riot* is dialogic which allows other voices to participate in the novel. It provides the readers with other interesting dimensions of a particular subject that the novelist deals with in the novel. The heteroglossia helps achieve multiple realities rather than one definitive unchanging meaning imported by the novelist.

The heteroglossia in the novel is clear when there are different points of view presented by different social classes regarding the history of India. These different speeches represented by different social classes often clash with each other. It is difficult to appreciate the novel without taking into account the historical perspective. History is treated as fiction. Tharoor seems to have a wonderful understanding of history of India as well as the present political system. The same views are also put forward in a book review posted by Sanjeev Kotnala: "There is a deep understanding of the historic and relevant contemporary facts and incidents" (Kotnala). Paras Dhir also shares this view: "...Hence the historical events as well as the fictional happenings depicted in the novel offers multiplicity of perspectives and provide different versions of historical as well as the fictional truth" (Dhir).

One of the voices in the novel that of Rudyard's comments briefly on the history of Coca Cola in India and FERA, the Foreign Exchange Regulation

Act, 1973. Rudyard is the father of Priscilla. He was sent on a business mission to India at the same time by Coca Cola. He also tells about the political ups and downs of the time and how it led to emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi. Though he tells all this from the business point of view, his narration records some of the very crucial moments from the history of India. He quotes the following as the words of George Fernandez during a parliamentary session: ““What kind of country is India, where you can get coke in the cities but no clean drinking water in the villages?”” (*Riot*, 31)

The novel takes readers back to 1989 which is a significant year in the history of India. This is the time which was a precursor of the big communal storm of Ayodhya episode. The demolition of Babri Masjid took place in 1992 and there were riots on large scale in almost all parts of India. Hundreds of people were killed in riots. Tharoor's novel *Riot* was just a warning of the big communal clouds which were surrounding the country. From this point of view, the novel is important as Tharoor has already fictionalized the future course in a very prophetic manner. The same views are put forward by Allen J Mendonca and Kanak Hirani in their article: “His book *Riot* has proved extraordinarily prophetic and Penguin has repackaged it with a cover of the Gujarat riots” (Mendonca and Kanak Hirani).

As a polyphonic novel, *Riot* does not deal only with a single man's point of view about history, but there are different voices in the novel that cannot be merged together. Ram Charan Gupta's point of view is quite contradictory to

the secularist's point of view. Ram Charan is very intolerant to Muslims as he believes that the Mughal emperor Babar demolished the temple and erected a mosque in its place as he states in these words:

...Or might it be, instead, that Babar, the Mughal invader, demolished the biggest, the best, the most important temple of the Hindus and replaced it with a mosque named for himself, just to rub the noses of the conquered in the rubble of their faith? (120)

Tharoor has presented another approach to history in the novel through the transcript of Randy Diggs, an American journalist's interview with Sarwar. The text shows that the Muslim emperors supported the cause of Hindu worship and helped in constructing many temples in Ayodhya. Different voices included in the novel often contradict each other. It adds substance to the polyphonic nature of *Riot* as Sarwar contradicts the historical perspective of Ram Charan in these lines:

...But the problem with this is that there's a lot of evidence for the opposite—for the building of temples in Ayodhya under Muslim rule,...Many historians, not just me, argue that Ayodhya filled up with temples as a direct result of support from the Muslims nawabs of the area, and that as the nawabi realm expanded, so did Ayodhya gain as a major Hindu pilgrimage center in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This was two hundred years after the Babri Masjid was built. (183)

Ram Charan Gupta's approach is based more on faith than the historical facts about the mosque. People like Ram Charan Gupta believe that history has done much wrong to them. They want to take revenge on history but they forget to take into account as Tharoor believes: "History in itself is revenge".

Similar views are also propounded by Amrendra K Sharma and Manju Roy who also believe in the polyphonic nature of the novel and assert that there are different points of view presented in the novel: "*Riot* portrays different types of conflict - of people, attitudes, philosophies, religions, loves and hatreds. Therefore, it was difficult to have just one point of view and naturally, a multitude of narrators was needed to have, presumably, different points of view. Some examples will make this idea clear. Ram Charan Gupta is an extremist firebrand Hindu who feels that even the Taj Mahal is actually a Hindu temple. Prof Sarwar believes in India's pluralism but, by no means, is he a representative of the majority of Muslim opinion" (Sharma and Manju Roy).

Tharoor has also accepted the fact that he has included different points of view in this novel as he writes in a column of *The Hindu*:

The story of *Riot* was a story of various kinds of collisions - of people, of cultures, ideologies, loves, hatreds - and it could not be told from just one point of view. The challenge I set myself in writing this book was not just to imagine a dozen different characters but to try and enter their imaginations, in other words to see the world through their eyes... Similarly I sought to depict

four or five different people's views of the Ram Janmabhoomi/Babri Masjid controversy; despite my own strong feelings about it, I tried honestly to empathise with each of them individually. (Tharoor)

Bakhtin believes that all thoughts are a matter of 'dialogue' and 'difference': dialogue requires the pre-existence of differences, which are then connected by an act of communication to generate new ideas and positions. In *Riot* too the dialogues between Ram Charan and Randy Diggs help to ascertain the pre-existing differences and through their communication new ideas are generated about it as Ram Charan thinks that even the Kashi Vishwanath temple was destroyed by the Muslims and the Gyan Vyapi mosque was replaced in its place by them.

The people like Ram Charan Gupta use religion and faith as a tool to achieve their political means. Religiosity in Indian politics has become a power game that has no moral issues and concerns as Paras Dhir states: "...The politicians exploit the mob psychology in the name of religion. As far as the shifting paradigms of power politics are concerned, the politics, instead of art of governing, has become the master art of misgovernance...." (Dhir)

Ram Charan's voice is often contradicted by the secular minded Lakshman who knows more about his religion and culture. He believes that Hinduism has no place for fundamentalism. In fact, it is a religion without

fundamentals. The views of Ram Charan are strongly contradicted by Lakshman in these lines:

So I'm not embarrassed to say I'm a believing Hindu. But I don't have anything in common with these so-called Hindu fundamentalists. Actually, it's a bit odd to speak of "Hindu Fundamentalism," because Hinduism is a religion without fundamentals: no organized church, no compulsory beliefs or rites of worship, no single sacred book...." (143)

Riot does not represent a communal clash between two communities living together; rather it represents the riot of all emotions and moral values. Another implicit voice that this novel echoes is that keeping silence is another big riot as it would encourage the people like Ram Charan to proceed with their intentions and perceptions. Sarwar criticizes the Shiv Sena leaders who are damaging the secular thread of India and call Hitler to be their leader. He quotes the German theologian Pastor Martin NiemueLLer to bring into light what happened to Hitler in these lines:

"...At first they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out, because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the communists, and I did not speak out, because I was not a communist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out, because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for me— and there was no one left out to speak for me." (184)

Sarwar, a professor of history, defends the cause of the Muslims and emphasizes the spirit of composite culture and tolerance. The best example of the secular spirit of the Muslims of India is that there are many saints who are worshipped by the Hindus like Nizamuddin Auliya, Moinuddin Chishti, Shah Madar, Ghazi Miyan, Sheikh Nasiruddin known as Chiragh-e-Delhi, or Khwaja Khizr. There is still no doubt in the fact that Muslims have been a victim of strong discrimination after the partition. Sarwar, an intellectual Muslim, feels the same: "Yes, there is prejudice in this country ...Indian Muslims suffer disadvantages, even discrimination, in a hundred different ways that I may never personally experience..." (112).

Tharoor has not only spoken about the communal riot between Muslims and Hindus but also about the communal strife between the Sikhs and the Hindus. There is 'riot' inside *Riot*. It makes the readers realize that communal disharmony has always been a big challenge to the secular face of India. Tharoor has included another important voice of Gurinder Singh, a Sikh, in this novel. His voice is no less anguished than the voice of the Muslims. His brother-in-law and nephew were also killed in the riot between Hindus and Sikhs.

The roots of communal riot between Sikhs and Hindus do not lie in any religious dispute; rather it was the political blunder made by the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. She ordered the killing of the militants in Golden temple that snatched away the lives of many of the innocent Sikhs. Even worse

was the situation after the murder of Indira Gandhi in 1984 that resulted into mass killings of the Sikhs. Indira Gandhi's action raised many questions about the secular politics of India. Politics cannot be separated from the history as Gurinder describes the riot against the Sikhs in these lines:

Even I cannot describe to you the full horror of what happened thereafter, Randy...There was an orgy of slaughter, of arson, of looting. Sikh neighborhoods were destroyed, families butchered, homes torched...the most merciless way possible. (194)

Riot also presents a wonderful commentary on the cultural variety of India that often results into cultural collisions. Tharoor has presented points of view of different characters on the cultural aspects of India. India has different religions, languages and geographical variations which contribute in making the composite culture of India. When these varied cultures collide with each other; riots are the result.

The plurality of India's cultures is an important aspect of the novel that adds meaning to the polyphonic nature of the novel. The dialogues among the different voices on the culture of India present a kind of analogy that one can adopt to understand the pluralistic Indian society. As a polyphonic novel requires the participation of all the cultural voices, Tharoor has very successfully presented a contrast between the culture of the East and the West, a contrast between the Orient and the Occident.

The eastern culture is represented by Lakshman who stands for India's cultural values. The west is represented by Priscilla who came to India with her own cultural values. Amrendra K Sharma and Manju Roy have also put forward the same views: "Further, the relationship between Indian civil servant and the American researcher leads to the perennial conflicts between the Oriental values and the Western perception of truth" (Sharma and Manju Roy). The same views are presented by Nanda Kumar in an article "Multiplicity of Voices in the novels of Shashi Tharoor":

...The conflict between Lakshman and Priscilla is the conflict between the Victorian ideals of duty, responsibility and respectability, and the Romantic credo of freedom, love and individual fulfillment. Or to put it in another way, it is the conflict between the East and the West. (Kumar)

India is a victim of cultural collisions. Many Hindus and Muslims sacrifice their lives to protect their socio-cultural and religious identities. The novel raises many questions like what are we living for? What is our truth? What does religion mean to us? Does any religion permit the massacre of the innocent people? Is a temple or mosque more important than a thousand lives?

Obviously, the novel only raises questions and does not give an answer. Like a polyphonic novel, there is no dominant voice that can give answer to these questions rather these realities and existential questions are raised from different perspectives by different characters.

Simultaneously, along with the different voices of the characters of the novel, one more implicit voice is present. It is not in the novel but it goes with the novel. This voice sometimes agrees with the voice of the characters and sometimes disagrees, and that is the voice of the reader. The novelist gives the reader enough scope in the construction of the meaning. Even the characters do not feel obligation of the author's consciousness; rather they are independent voices, capable of standing alongside, agreeing or disagreeing with, even rebelling against their creator.

The novel includes many personal voices too. It provides enough scope to take into account the personal relationships of many characters. The love affair between Lakshman and Priscilla is an important theme in the novel. It includes many voices of the external world indirectly involved in the development of the narrative. It is difficult to determine whether it is love or lust that brought Lakshman and Priscilla closer. Lakshman's sexual relationship with Priscilla may be termed as an Indian's curiosity to discover the female sexuality of a blonde woman.

There are other voices too. They go simultaneously with the novel and make the readers aware of different perspectives while the author was writing this novel. For example, the novel also points towards colonial India and exploitation of the Indians by the British. These implicit voices attract the attention of the readers towards other dimensions. Gurinder's reference to the exploitation of the Indians by the British hurts Priscilla. His speech can be

interpreted at two levels; the first is concerned with the economic and political exploitation of the Indians and the second is sexual exploitation of Lakshman by Priscilla as is revealed by the words of Lakshman here:

“...We were at dinner at Lucky’s place, half a dozen of us, and he’d clearly had too much to drink, but in the middle of a conversation about colonialism he announced, “The British came to exploit us, took what they wanted and left, and in the process, they changed us.” Then he turned to me quite directly and added, “You come to change us but in the process you also take what you want. Isn’t that just another form of exploitation?”” (170)

Priscilla’s sexual involvement with Lakshman may be termed as another form of colonial exploitation at the cost of Lakshman’s family.

There are also certain other voices in the novel which are never heard and they never speak yet the readers have an idea about it. One such example is Priscilla’s addressing her friend Cindy to whom she writes her letter. The author creates suspense and curiosity among readers to know more about the certain voices which remain unheard. Priscilla hints towards the relationship of her friend Cindy with someone named Matt but does not provide details about it. It proves that there are many implicit voices in a polyphonic novel which can be only guessed but not heard as these lines reveal: “But enough about this place. Cindy, how’s your love life? Is Matt still acting as if what happened between you two never happened”? (22)

The following lines of Priscilla show that there is another love story going on somewhere in the USA, but the readers cannot have details of or access to it. The author has left many things for the readers to ponder about. There are some issues which are cleared by the author by presenting the voice of the people of different sects and classes as in the case of Ram Janam Bhoomi temple. The different polyphonic voices in the novel present a balanced view which is not biased towards any community. Tharoor himself speaks of three voices operating explicitly in this novel in an interview given to Joanne J. Myers:

... The story of the riot itself is told through three voices: the Hindu chauvinist leader of the town, who speaks with passion about his convictions about the wrong that he is trying to right; the district administrator of the town, who talks about trying to control what happened; and the superintendent of police, who had the responsibility for managing the breakdown in law and order.
(Myers)

Yet the writer has left many issues for the readers which can only be guessed. For example the mystery of the murder of Priscilla is not resolved by any of the polyphonic voices until the end of the novel.

Lakshman's explanation of different cultural, religious and linguistic aspects of Indian society conveys Indian identity to the West. Lakshman's details to Priscilla about various aspects of Indian society reveal the heteroglot

voices of India. Lakshman tells Priscilla that language, region, caste, class and religion are the five major factors of division in India. Lakshman tries to brief Priscilla how India is divided into different caste, class as well as religious, political, communist, and Marxist groups. The author suggests that democracy is the solution of all the problems of the Indians, particularly the problems of the minorities like Muslims and Sikhs. Similar kind of views are also presented by Amrendra K Sharma and Manju Roy: "The appalling quality of our leadership may be a matter of concern to us, but the solutions to the flaws of democracy also lie in democracy itself not outside democracy" (Sharma and Manju Roy). Tharoor also attracts attention towards the polyglot nature of the Indian society in these lines:

It's worked, Priscilla. We have given passports to a dream, a dream of an extraordinary, polyglot, polychrome, polyconfessional country. Democracy will solve the problems we're having with some disaffected Sikhs in Punjab; and democracy, more of it, is the only answer for the frustrations of India's Muslims too. (45)

The words of Priscilla show how language and utterance are interlinked with each other and cannot be separated from each other. Language carries an ideology within itself. The words have socially charged meanings that have their contextual meaning in the society. Bakhtin believes that ideology is semiotic in form and ideas do not exist apart from the medium of language.

The form taken by and the ideology of the literary work are inseparable. Form is ideological at the same time that ideology must take some form. That is what Bakhtin calls “sociological stylistics”. The heteroglossia of the novel is revealed by Priscilla’s comment on the role of the Indian women in the society. Priscilla has brought her own ideology that is related to the social and intellectual class in which she is born and raised.

A love affair goes on between Lakshman and Priscilla. It is more of a passionate love based on physical passion and attraction. Both of them come from different social, religious, political and spiritual backgrounds, and thus bring their own heteroglossia to the novel. Their ideologies contradict with each other often as they bring their own set of values with them.

In Indian context, love comes after marriage while in western context love is something that leads to marriage. It is difficult for the Orient and Occident to feel comfortable with the totally different ideologies. Paras Dhir comments:

...One factor that really keeps us glued to the book is the presentation of Priscilla-Lakshman relationship. It highlights contrasting features of two cultures—Western and Eastern, Occident and Orient. They represent the attitudes of two different cultures towards love, sex, and marriage in concrete terms....
(Dhir)

Tharoor makes many references in the novel which bring about a difference between the culture of the East and the West. This novel is a wonderful amalgam of the values of the East and the West. He has satirized the character of Lakshman who despite being an I.A.S. officer was very much rooted in his own culture. His approach is quite contradictory to the western approach. Lakshman states in these lines:

I imprison her fists in my hands, and it is as if I am praying, with her my votive offering. "I'm Indian," I say simply. "I enjoy the Beatles and Bharata Natyam. I act in Oscar Wilde plays and I eat with my fingers. I read Marx, and I let my parents arrange my marriage." (153)

Lakshman is deeply attached to his daughter and wife. For him, his social image and his responsibilities as a district magistrate are more important than his lady love. It is all the part of his traditional and cultural values that he cannot afford to ignore. It also shows how the values keep an Indian man tied up. Amrendra K Sharma and Manju Roy write:

...Lakshman, though deeply in love with Priscilla Hart, refuses to go with her, as he does not want to lose his social image, his job and his daughter. Though every cell of his wants to be with this American lady, he does not want to lose social prestige and reputation just to feed his emotions...." (Sharma and Manju Roy)

In spite of loving Priscilla passionately he cannot marry her because of the very socio-ideological world he is brought up in and cannot break the rule that reminds him of one of the traditions of the East he is brought in as these lines state:

...I think of Geetha and her parents and mine, and of little lost Rekha calling bewildered her Appa, her eyes wet with unwiped tears. These are moments, of course, when I too fantasize about a new life with a new wife, a new honey-blond wife...and I forget, momentarily, my responsibilities, the burdens of guilt and obligation that shackle me to the present. (104)

In the novel there are two voices of Lakshman which are presented; the voice of his conscience and his lust. Obviously they cannot be merged together. The dream sequence of Lakshman helps to expand the narrative thread of the novel:

...Or another dream, in which I am teetering at the top of a skyscraper with Geetha and Rekha trying to hold on to me, they are afraid and crying and I am shouting out to them to hold on, but somehow it is I who leans too far off the edge and then I am falling from a great height, falling falling falling with my wife's and daughter's wailing in my ears, and I always wake up before I hit the ground. Of course I can never go back to sleep. (pp104-105)

In a polyphonic novel, there are different implicit voices. The voice of Lakshman's conscience cannot be avoided. It makes readers see the character of Lakshman from a different perspective. For Lakshman, having sex outside marriage, is a matter of moral dilemma. Unlike Priscilla he associates it with the feelings of guilt. Priscilla does not feel guilty about having sex with a married man or there is no question of associating the sense of guilt with one's biological desires. Similar kinds of views are also presented by Amrendra Sharma in these words:

...In fact, several topics that are normally taken as taboos, like extramarital affairs etc. in Indian culture, do not even cause Priscilla to raise her eyebrow. To illustrate, she perceives sex as a means of expressing love to the man she loves. So she is totally unfazed by the fact that she has already enjoyed several dates and sexual encounters with Lakshman." (Sharma)

The dialogues of different characters throw light on the heteroglot nature of the novel that rises from the very use of their language made of different syntactical items wrapped in its socio-cultural contexts and ideology.

In the polyphonic novel, different modes of narrative such as realism, naturalism, fantasy and postmodernism play a vital role. *Riot* also offers an amalgam of these different genres. Lakshman fantasizes his love with Priscilla while his responsibilities towards his family are the part of realism. The two voices of realism and fantasy are very apt in the novel.

There are also instances in the novel when the characters leave many things unsaid that create a sort of suspense in the mind of the readers. For example, Priscilla leaves many things unsaid in her letters to Cindy. It might be too personal to write in a letter, but that information might give a clue to her murder. These unsaid voices contribute a lot in the polyphonic nature of the novel as Bakhtin believes what is left unsaid is more important than what is said by a character. Priscilla does not mention many of her secrets in the letter to her friend Cindy that might help resolve the mystery of Priscilla's death as these lines of Priscilla's reveal:

....Something happened that day that I don't really want to write about, but it made me realize how much I love him, how much I want to give myself to him, how much I'm sure he is the right man for me. I want to spend the rest of my life with him, Cin, and it's driving me crazy...." (233)

Tharoor has dealt not only with the inner voices of the characters but also with the confusion and the inner struggle his characters experience. As in the case of Lakshman, he could not take a decision regarding whether he has to fly to U.S. with Priscilla or he has to remain in India. He can be compared to Hamlet here who was also in the same state of indecisiveness of "to be or not to be". Lakshman sounds his fears in these lines:

...And yet the alternative is equally unimaginable. Abandon my solemn responsibilities to my wife, my parents, my daughter, my

extended family, her family our caste? To run away with another woman? An American! And where will we go? To do what?
(157)

There is another voice presented here which is the voice of Gurinder, Lakshman's friend. He does not want him to divorce his wife for a foreigner. Gurinder's suggestion to Lakshman regarding his married life portrays the character of an Indian wife who is culturally different from the Western wives. Gurinder takes pride in his culture. His words represent the image of an ideal Indian wife as well as the big cultural gap between the East and the West in these lines:

"...They're not like us. It's a different country, a different culture, a different planet, man. You've lived all your life with a definite set of values...I know you're not entirely happy with Geetha, what the hell, it's never been a secret, but come on yaar, she's been a good wife to you. She runs a good house, serves a great table, gets the best out of the servants—if she gives them hell once in a while?---and spends a lot of time with your daughter...." (185)

This variety of dialogism which is borne out of the variety of the usage of language adds to the heteroglossia of the novel. Different characters of the novel perceive the world from their own perspectives which are obviously

contradictory to each other. There are differences in the perception of the people.

Ram Charan comes with his own religious background. He finds himself to be perfect according to the ideologies he is governed with. He finds nothing wrong in taking out a procession to build a temple or to massacre the Muslims. Lakshman brings his own set of values which are not charged by the orthodox religious identity and instincts but by his own secular outlook, upbringing and education. It does not allow his conscience to meddle up with the religious orthodox.

Priscilla comes with her own social and cultural background. She feels uncomfortable with an unfamiliar culture and people. Sarwar, despite being a communist, has sympathy for his religion and has his own set of ideology. Gurinder also brings certain set of ideas which are governed by his past particularly the death of his nephew and brother-in-law during the anti-sikh riot. Katherine and Rudyard see the life from their own perspective. *Riot* represents these different voices which often clash with each other and impart different insights and meaning to the novel.

Another aspect of the polyphonic nature of the novel shows that there are voices from the past especially of Priscilla when she was in India earlier with her father as a fifteen year old girl. The story of Priscilla has another story within the story that includes the voices of her father. The details provided by

Priscilla about her father unfold another dimension of her father's personality and gives an insight into his character as she says in these lines:

“...But I can't forgive him. Not just for doing what he did, hurting Mom, destroying the family I'd always taken for granted... I hated find him like that...I would shudder remembering my father, seeing him naked like that, moving in and out of that woman, slapping her behind, I'd remember the noises they made, his whoops, her moans—it was awful.” (79)

It was undoubtedly shocking for her tender sensibilities at such an age. She could not feel comfortable in the company of the boys for a long time as a result of it. The above paragraph shows the ideological world of Priscilla's father as well as the common male attitude and his desire of having multiple sexual partners. The disloyalty of Priscilla's father for her mother has a direct parallel in Lakshman too. Amazingly, Priscilla continues to love a man having same characteristics. She admits it in the following line: “And then you ended up with me, I couldn't help myself thinking. Another married man cheating on his wife with an exotic foreigner” (79).

Throughout the novel, the narrative voice moves between two types of discourse - literary discourse and oral discourse. In it the narrative voice points towards an objective style of speech - relating the action as something happen to someone else, to the characters, society or an institution. The readers can

detect a separation between the situation of the voice telling the tale and the situation voices with in the tale.

The narrator also becomes one of the voices coming from the tale. At times, the oral voice will emerge from within a literary passage, as it does in the sequence predicting the cause of the murder of Priscilla. The narrative sequence raises many questions in the mind of the reader that sometimes leads him to an imaginative conclusion while other times he rejects his own presumptions as the narrative sequence presents another point of view that makes the reader feel the other way round.

Mrs. Hart's inquiry about the contraceptive pills and Priscilla's affair with Lakshman leads the readers to many times think that Lakshman might have got her murdered. He did not want others to know that he was having an extra marital relationship with a foreigner. This conclusion is soon subverted when other voices suggest some other reasons of her death. The use of the Kotli by the rioters where Priscilla was waiting for Lakshman raises other doubts in the mind of the readers. They believe that the rioters might have killed her so as to prevent her from disclosing the secrets to the police. Another possibility of her murder may be her interference with the family of Fatima Bi. She wanted to see Fatima as an independent woman who could have her own voice in the family. Priscilla's letter to her friend Cindy in which she writes about the violent behavior of Fatima's husband creates another twist in the murder mystery of Priscilla. Her speech points out that Fatima's husband could

have killed her as he did not like the undue interference of Priscilla in his family affairs. Fatima's husband, Ali, visited the centre and abused Kadambri. Priscilla, Das and other workers. He was angry with Priscilla as she provided his wife with some contraceptive pills. Fatima's fear and words make the readers look for another possibility of her murder. Priscilla states:

...That look of pure hatred on Ali's face was frankly terrifying. In the instant that he flung those condoms at me, I knew he would have done the same thing if he'd happened to be holding a stone, or a knife. (160)

There is no voice present in the novel which can provide an authentic report of Priscilla's murder. The novelist creates suspense through the dialogues of different characters. Different characters present their different perspectives about the murder of Priscilla. There are mere assumptions and confusions the readers have to face until the end. The scrapbook of Priscilla might contain some secrets about her murder, but Lakshman has never revealed it. Moreover, she was also pregnant. It also points towards the fact that Lakshman might have got her killed as he would not wish his secret affair to be made public. Gurinder had suppressed this detail of the postmortem that Priscilla was pregnant as Lakshman says: "One more detail Gurinder had to suppress in the postmortem. She was carrying my child." (265)

This polyphonic novel is not merely concerned with the political and historical voices but also with other voices. These voices throw light on many

of the contemporary social aspects of Indian society. The novel deals with the current problems of India too as Mr. Das talks about the health and medical conditions of the women in India. His discourse with Mrs. Hart brings to light many facts about the Indian medical services as well as the socio-economic pressure on the women to bear more children as these lines reveal:

“...This is particularly apparent in India, where women are placed under considerable social and family pressure to bear more children, which in turn reduces their autonomy as decisional agents in society...Women who resist repeated childbearing will exercise greater authority within their family...reduce the strain on the limited economic and environmental resources of a developing country like India....”
(pp 118-119)

The narrator shows here his telepathic power as he enters the mind of his character, Lakshman. He points towards many things which are directly connected to the narrator himself in the novel, seemingly biographical in nature. The narrator does not involve himself directly with the narrative mode. He presents his points of view through his character Lakshman. The beauty of the polyphony of this novel lies in the fact that the narrator comments on the very novel he has written himself, the present novel *Riot*. His comments do not come in his voice but through his mouthpiece Lakshman. He speaks to Priscilla in these lines:

“I’d like to write a novel,” I tell her, “that does not read like a novel. Novels are too easy—they tell story from, in a linear narrative, from start to finish. They’ve done that for decades. Centuries, perhaps. I’d do it differently.” (135)

The novelist here has presented his views on the very genre of the novel as well as the polyphonic style of the present novel *Riot*. He implicitly suggests that it is a departure from the conventional form of the novel. Tharoor has done it differently from the conventional style of the novel reminding one of Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*. Salman Rushdie has also included different voices in his novel. There are voices within the voices in *Riot*. Tharoor makes an implicit reference to his other novels too in the present novel:

“No,” I reply shortly, “someone’s done that already. I’ve read about this chap who’s just reinvented the Mahabharata as a twentieth-century story—epic style, oral tradition, narrative digressions, the lot. No, what I mean is, why can’t I write a novel that reads like—like an encyclopedia?” (pp 135-136)

In these lines he has made an obvious reference to his previous novel *The Great Indian Novel* though in an indirect way. It is difficult to make out why he has mentioned his previous novel here.

In a polyphonic novel, the voice of the reader is also an important voice; that cannot be ignored. It is one of the many voices in the novel distinctive

from the voice of the narrator and those voices of many characters present in the novel. Tharoor accepts that he has provided the readers with enough scope to raise his voice independently in the novel. It seems he is quite familiar with the fact as he mentioned earlier that he was writing *Riot* as a polyphonic novel:

“It won’t matter,” I responded excitedly. “The beginning foretells the end. Down with the omniscient narrator! It’s time for the omniscient reader. Let the reader construct her own novel each time she reads it.” (136)

Tharoor, through the voice of Lakshman, comments on the form and contents of his novel *Riot*. He admits the fact that he has included different polyphonic agents in this novel. He has included all the classical elements which should be present in the novel as he states here:

“...You know, the ancient Sanskrit text on drama, the Nataya Shastra, prescribes the nine essential emotional elements that must go into any work of entertainment: love, hate, joy, sorrow, pity, disgust, courage, pride and compassion...Let them bring to the page their own memories of love and hate, their own feelings of love and sorrow, their own reactions of disgust and pity, their own stirrings of courage and pride and compassion. And if they do that, why should form matter? Let the form of the novel change with each reading, and let the content change too.” (pp 136-137)

Riot exemplifies Bakhtin's concept of polyphonic novel in which truth is not a finalized and unchanging product. It is an ongoing process in a dialogue that is left open with no final conclusion. Tharoor does not advocate any truth; rather he presents truth from the points of view of his different characters. The truth of Ram Charan may be different from the truth of Sarwar and Lakshman as the truth of Priscilla may be different from Lakshman's truth. No truth is final. There are only perspectives to look at truth, but truth is not given any final entity by the author. Lakshman who seems to be Tharoor's mouthpiece states:

“The Truth! The singular thing about truth, my dear, is that you can only speak of it in the plural. Doesn't your understanding of the truth depend on how you approach it? On how much you know?” (137)

Works Cited

- Dhir, Paras. "Shashi Tharoor's *Riot*: Perspectives on History, Politics and Culture" *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* Summer Issue, Volume I, Number 1, 2009.
- Fowler, Roger. "Polyphony in Hard Times." *Language, Discourse and Literature: An Introductory Reader in Discourse Stylistics*. Ed. Ronald Carter and Paul Simpson. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989.
- Kaufman, Glenn J. "Divya Dham: A Temple in Transition" 26 Apr 2006. 10 May 2011 <<http://www.barnard.edu/arx/html/hinduismhere/glen.html>>
- Kotnala, Sanjeev. "RIOT by SHASHI THAROOR" 4 Apr 2011. 10 May 2011 <<http://sanjeevkotnala.blog.co.in/2011/04/04/riot-by-shashi-tharoor/>>
- Kumar, Nanda. "Multiplicity of Voices in the novels of Shashi Tharoor" 9 Oct 2007. 10 May 2011 <<http://nandantk.blogspot.com/2007/10/multiplicity-of-voices-in-novels-of.html>>
- Mendonca, Allen J, and Kanak Hirani. "Shashi Tharoor's a riot" TNN. 12 Aug 2002. 10 May 2011 <<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bangalore-times/Shashi-Tharoors-a-riot/articleshow/18893640.cms>>
- Raman, Meenakshi. "Shashi Tharoor's *Riot*: A Showcase of Multiple Perspectives." *Contemporary Indian Writing in English: Critical Perceptions*. Ed. N.D.R. Chandra. 1st ed. Vol. 2. New Delhi: Surup and Sons, 2005. 220-237.
- Sharma, Amrendra K. and Manju Roy. *The Grammar of Conflicts in Riot*. IRWLE VOL. 6 No. I January 2010.
- Sharma, Amrendra. "Priscilla Hart's Search for Identities in *Riot*" *The Indian Review of World Literature in English*, Vol. 5 No.II – July, 2009.
- Tewari, V.K.. *Bakhtin: Dialogics of language*. New Delhi: Suman Khanna for BOOK PLUS, 2001
- Tharoor, Shashi. "The Shashi Tharoor column: A departure, fictionally" *The Hindu*. 16 Sep 2001. 10 May 2011 <<http://hindu.com/thehindu/2001/09/16/stories/13160675.htm>>
- . Interview with Joanne J. Myers. *Sectarian Violence in India: The Story of the One Riot*. *Public Affairs Program*. 28 Nov 2001. 10 May 2011 <<http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/resources/transcripts/695.html>>
- . *Riot*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2001. (All the references to this chapter have been indicated by page number only.)
- Waugh, Patricia. *Literary Theory and Criticism*. New Delhi: OUP, 2006.

CHAPTER 4

Treating Contemporary Myths: Politics and Fantasy in *Show Business*

Shashi Tharoor in his novel *Show Business* reinvents Bollywood and the history of a superstar Ashok Banjara. He uses the critical devices of parody, satire, humour and irony for this purpose. The novel does not only amuse the readers but also provokes serious thoughts about the film industry. Bollywood has been very close to the Indian masses. It is the representation of Indian society, politics, history, culture, traditions and customs. Sukhdev Sandhu writes: "...Bollywood movies, like all films, are entertainment. They're also about history, aesthetics and politics..." (Sandhu)

Bollywood has produced many stories about its glamour and stars. These stories have become a mythical conceit that Indian masses accept without questioning its truth. M.H. Abrams has described the Greek concept of myth in his book *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: "In classical Greek, "Mythos" signified any story or plot, whether true or invented" (Abrams). Oxford English dictionary describes myth as "some thing that many people believe but does not exist or is false". In the light of the above definitions, one can say that popular Hindi cinema has invented many contemporary myths about the glamour of the Bollywood and modern Indian society. Film heroes are treated just like gods in the society and command great respect. The same views are put forward by Candia McWilliam in a book review:

...In India, film has a mystic power and its main characters are near-gods. Often religious in content, shown to multitudes, sometimes on huge outdoor screens that glow like apparitions over an enchanted crowd hunkered down in the street, Hindi films are the embodied dreams of millions of the poorest people on earth. Their stars are some of the richest, most known, and therefore most powerful, people in India....” (Mc William)

Tharoor has made an attempt to debunk these myths in this novel by throwing light on the truth of this industry which many times remains untold.

The reading of the novel is an eye opening experience for people who so blindly believe in the willing suspension of disbelief offered by films. The cinema creates a dream world for the people. Their unfulfilled and unconscious desires get fulfilled there. Sometimes the ordinary people imagine themselves replacing the heroes of the movie. It is all the part of a world they do not have an access to. Nanda Kumar is of the view that:

...At the same time, the average Indian is fatally attracted to and often motivated by the world of films; his impossible dreams and unattainable ambitions find a vicarious fulfillment in celluloid; thus the major part of his mental life is coloured and occupied by a pseudo-world of make-believe. From this perspective nothing appears more intrinsic to the Indian psyche than the cinema....”
(Kumar)

Tharoor attacks the falsehood, artificiality and decorum of the iconic and god-like figures of the Indian masses. He writes this novel to bring to light the real facts of the Hindi cinema and break the romantic notion of an ordinary Indian. According to Tharoor Bollywood film viewers "...they dream with their eyes open" (20).

The main theme of the novel is Bollywood. It seems that Tharoor knows well all the technical points about the cast of a movie. His description of the stage setting, lightening, costumes, choreography and the narration of the movies prove him to be a potential film director. It seems that Tharoor has studied well Bollywood and the mechanics of making a film. He even thanks the officials of Film City for their help. He pays them thanks in the acknowledgement: "...My thanks, too, to the able and co-operative officials of Film City, Bombay, who gave me detailed access to their sets, studios and locales, and to the film crews who allowed me intrude upon their work..." (*Show Business*, 309)

Tharoor's *Show Business* seems to be a light reading, a means of providing entertainment, but it is very serious in nature and tone. The novel does not comment only on the life of Ashok Banjara, but also gives an insight into the social and political ills of India. As discussed above, to achieve this effect, he has used satire, humor, irony and parody throughout the novel, all serving to amuse as well as instruct the readers. The same views are also put forward in a book review by Mandar Talvekar:

...Parody and satire, in *Show Business*, enable Tharoor to cleverly reinvent Bollywood and narrate the history of a Bollywood superstar in way that amuses but at the same time provokes a serious thought about the industry and the stories told by the industry about itself and India.... (Talvekar)

The novel does not confine itself only to politics and Bollywood. It expands itself to all other important aspects of Indian life such as religion, mythology, culture, cricket, the social and professional relationships, the family and individual life. Tharoor debunks the myth of many of the social, political institutions as well as the professional and personal relationships of the stars. It includes almost all the aspects of contemporary India as well as the new challenges that India of today is facing. He displays the hypocrisy of individuals as well as institutions. He has also mocked the institutions of marriages in the novel which Bollywood stars refuse to respect.

The treatment given to many of the subjects in the novel presents the novelist to be a very clever satirist who reminds one of Swift. Like Swift he too satirizes with a latent purpose of instructing his readers through satire. Satire becomes instrumental to bring a kind of change in the society. Here the novelist is more of a satirist. He is dissatisfied with the hypocrisy of the social, political, religious, and cultural world presented through the cinema.

It is amazing to see that Tharoor performs the business of satire in his own unique way. The book has comic aspects but emphasizes its seriousness of

purposes. It is a wonderful combination of cynicism and sorrow. It leaves the readers thinking something of a serious nature beyond the romantic dream world of Bollywood.

Tharoor's *Show Business* shows that the Bollywood has a strong connection with the Indian society. Many times, it is very difficult to imagine India without Bollywood. It seems they are two different sides of the same coin and cannot be separated from each other. Such is the fascination of Bollywood that every Indian, no matter which region or religion he belongs to, feels a close affinity. The movies display their own hope, despair, love, anger, success and failures in a very metaphorical manner.

Bollywood has also become a way to preserve the linguistic and cultural identity of certain communities. It is true particularly about the Muslims belonging to the minority in India. Bollywood, though it produces Hindi films, has much of the vocabulary of Urdu language which in itself is derived from Arabic and Persian. All the songs and most of the dialogues in Bollywood movies are in Urdu language. Language carries with itself certain ideology and is wrapped in culture. That shows how diverse the Bollywood cinema is and how it advocates the unity in diversity. Tejaswini also agrees with the fact that Urdu is the language of Bollywood:

Hindi films however continued to be made in Hindustani and many prominent Urdu poets worked as lyricists within the Bombay film industry. It is hard to imagine film songs or

dialogues without the vocabulary, idioms and metaphors derived from Urdu language and literature... all central concepts in Hindi cinema – are from Urdu's Persian and Arabic-derived vocabulary. (Ganti, 23)

Tharoor tries to portray how the dominant tendencies in the Bombay film industry have been escapist, frivolous, fantastic and formulaic. They are only for entertainment. The Indian films are usually very formulaic. The same views are presented by Mandar Talvekar in a book review:

One of the primary sources of generating and telling "fiction" in India is by watching a movie. We are the largest producers of celluloid fiction in the world, churning out hundreds of fantastic and escapist films packed with protagonists (performing the most ludicrous actions, stunts, and songs with the straightest of faces) who are no less than super heroes...." (Talvekar)

Tharoor has exposed truth of the film industry in this novel. There is much corruption prevalent in the Bollywood. There are incidents of the directors and producers sexually exploiting the actors and the actresses to give them a role in the movies. On one hand, Tharoor shows the glamorous life of the actors and actresses in the movie, but on the other hand, he reveals the hollowness and artificiality of their lives. The actors themselves know what they do is contrary to reality and has no truth. Ashok, the hero of Tharoor's

novel, accepts this truth when he talks to Malini, another character of the novel. in these lines:

‘Artificial?’ I asked incredulously. ‘What do you mean, artificial? Isn’t all acting artificial?’ ‘You know, all that running round trees, chasing heroines. Singing songs as you waltz through parks. You know what I mean.’ (6)

Ashok marries Mehnaz in the temple just to assure her and not to own her. It is something very common in the industry. It is another form of sexual corruption in the industry. Mehnaz proudly gives an interview to the film magazines:

But as if you want to know anything about me these days. Me. your wife, Ashok ji! Okay, not your lawfully wedded wife, but what was it that witch Radha Sabins called me—your ‘awfully bedded wife’. I know you were angry when the temple marriage got into the magazines...I always said ‘Him’. With a capital H—I always told them to write it that way...we only write it that way when we write about God. And I said, so what He was God to me. (pp 184-185)

Often actors are involved in different kinds of sex scandals. Sexual relations with other women and actresses are very common. They often break the conjugal walls and have sex with other women. Tharoor has depicted this

dark side of the so called glamorous world through the characters of Ashok and Mehnaz.

Tharoor satirizes the hollowness and artificiality of the Bollywood world as they present a make believe-world before the audience. Tharoor's ironical description of the beauty icons produces a lot of humour. Ashok, the main character of the novel states: "...Move, step, turn, as sari-clad Abha, yesterday's heartthrob, old enough to be my mother and just about beginning to show it, nimbly evades my practiced lunges and runs" (3).

Tharoor satirizes the film industry and the kind of films being made in India. Everything is illusionary there. Nothing is real. He is also quite critical of the censor board that allows nudity and homicide. His sense of satire becomes even harsher when he comments on the physical attributes of the actresses. The narrator satirizes the so called actresses through the protagonist of his novel. Ashok:

I can't believe what I have just seen: breasts so shrivelled and empty they are like pockets of desiccated skin, their tips drooping in dry dismay. Abha's bosom is that of a ninety-year old. The most famous bust in India is a pair of falsies. (20)

Jennifer Takhar has similar views:

In the satirical novel *Show Business* by Shashi Tharoor, which shamelessly lampoons the Indian film business and its

superficiality, we have perhaps the best example of Bollywood's fantasy element. In this novel nothing is as it first appears, something that movie megastar Ashok Banjara finds out when he undresses the legendary actress Abha Patel, famously known in Bollywood for her beauty and the abundance of her bosom. Ashok remains stupefied when his eyes lay impaled on the actress' full frontal nudity: "I can't believe what I have just seen. The most famous bust in India is a pair of falsies." (Takhar)

Tharoor, through the character of Pranay, speaks of so many unheard stories of Bollywood which are incredibly true. These stories show that Tharoor has not only studied the glamorous life of Bollywood but also the promiscuous and unknown aspects. Sunita represents the women who have been sexually exploited by the so called producers and the godfathers of Bollywood. Pranay narrates their condition in these words:

You think I'm making this up, don't you? You've heard all the stories about how much these women suffer, how they endure the humiliation with teeth clenched and eyes closed, only the thought of their starving babies keeping them on the bed while the raunchy, paunchy producer heaves and pants over them...Sunita did. (55)

Show Business has a very close affinity with *Starry Nights*, a novel based on the same theme of Bollywood, written by Shobha De. She has also

exposed the reality of the so called glamorous world of Bollywood. The novel revolves around Asha Rani, an actress. She is sexually exploited by the producers, actors and other financiers. Sunita of *Show Business* represents Asha Rani of *Starry Nights*. She also had to have sex with the producer to get a role in the movie. Asha Rani, the actress, responds to the producer in a very angry tone:

Asha Rani had looked at him steadily. ‘You financed and produced my first film, Kishenbhai, but you extracted payment from my body. You call me a prostitute but you forget that you were my first pimp so don’t throw ahsan to me. I owe nothing!’

And she had said it again, ‘I owe you nothing.’ (De 236)

A wonderful commentary made on different characters satirizes the glamorous world of Bollywood and shatters many myths. The hero of the novel, Ashok Banjara, starts his career with a flop movie *Musafir* and then reaches the stardom. He has passed through many ups and downs in his life. He also has to pass through many critical moments in his life. His erotic encounter with Radha Sabins shows that it is not only women who are always sexually victimized but also men. Radha Sabin wants to exploit Ashok sexually taking an advantage of his situation: “...The result is a pelvic jerk that rolls us both off sofa, sends us crashing into the coffee-table and deposits us on the floor – with Radha still on top, mouth glued to mine and hands safely...my eyes... I give up.” (72)

The juxtaposition of *Show Business* and *Starry Nights* brings out many similarities as well as differences between the two works. Though the theme of both of the novels is same, there is difference in the treatment of diction. Tharoor does not use obscene language to describe the sexual encounter while Shobha De uses more obscene language to expose the naked truth of Bollywood.

Shobha De's Asha Rani and Tharoor's Ashok have the same passion to join Bollywood. Both of them have been exploited by the industry and know the reality of this world. Ashok realizes truth of this world when he was seriously injured in his last mythological movie *Kalki* as the death was approaching him: "You are not real. None of you is real. This is not real, only the pain is real. And me, I am not real either, and I will never be real again" (306). Ashok had a serious accident during the shooting of this film. The movie is very ironic as the first victim is the hero who himself is an embodiment of evil. The same views are put forward in a book review: "...Readers will not miss the irony of the situation here. Kalki is supposed to destroy all the evil on the earth. And it is while playing Kalki that Ashok meets an accident that might potentially destroy him and his way of life...."

Asha faces the reality of this glamorous world when her self esteem was hurt. She was struggling to restore her lost honour and moral character. She had become an icon of sexual gratification in the industry. She was treated as a call girl by the producers and the actors: "...The industry was full of bhooka. sex-

starved men who had chidiyas like Asha Rani for breakfast...Most of the others just fucked and forgot. No roles, no nothing....” (De 237)

Shobha De takes into account what phases an actress has to pass through before she becomes a star. In case of Asha Rani of *Starry Nights*, she has to suffer much humiliation in the industry. Kishenbhai introduces her to a choreographer in these humiliating words: “...Bloody whore! Can’t dance two steps and acting so high and mighty. All these heroines are the same, come from the gutter and behave like hit. They think we haven’t clue about their past. This bitch is no different....” (De 244)

Asha loved Akshay, another sensual and sexually attractive figure of the Bollywood. Despite being a married man, he had developed a sexual relationship with Asha. He only loved her body and stardom. She was not only cheated by Akshay but also beaten by him. It shows what happens in this industry. The narrator describes a scene when Asha was brutally beaten by her lover, Akshay:

The astonished people outside had seen a naked Asha Rani cowering on the couch opposite the dressing table with Akshay poised to strike her with his belt. The room had been totally trashed: the costumes were in tatters... Amma had rushed in and thrown a table cloth over her daughter...This girl is nothing but a pricey prostitute... No morals, nothing. You can’t call yourself a mother—you are scum.... (De 280)

Asha had an affair with Seth Amir Chand who was an M.P. and worked for the underworld. He helped Asha Rani in establishing herself in the film industry and used her body in return. His love for her symbolizes lust, a mockery of true love. Like Shobha De, Tharoor is also critical of the role of politics in India as it has become a centre of corruption.

Asha then keeps on having her successive affairs with different people in Bollywood. All of them exploit her sexually. The same was happening in the life of Ashok, the protagonist of Tharoor's *Show Business*. He was also having a series of his love affairs and sexual encounters with the new actresses turning up in the Bollywood. Neither of the two was satisfied with what they were doing.

Ashok and Asha had similar beginnings. They had to serve their seniors in the film industry. They often had to provide them with sensual and sexual pleasure. Ashok who joined the film industry had to massage the back of Abha, the senior actor:

I continue stroking her back, the whole of it this time, and find myself unable to resist the obvious temptation. Here I am, a normal, red-blooded, sexually deprived twenty-five-year-old Indian male, in intimate proximity to the most famous bosom of India, with only an unhooked bra between me and a vision of paradise. And she is asleep, knocked out; he need never even know. (19)

The same was happening in the life of Asha Rani who also had to be in the private service of Akshay. She had to give him a massage that was more sexual than physical. Shobha De has used wonderful similes to describe this scene which are very ironical:

‘...Special oil we use for ceremonial baths. Your body will smell of it for a week—now relax let me give you a massage.’ And with that Asha Rani had mounted him, and pouring a palmful of the divine-smelling oil over his erection, had slowly begun massaging him between his thighs. She moved like a lithe dancer: her hair falling all over his chest, her breast moving above his face...Akshay had groaned surrendering himself to her ministrations. (De 240)

Women like Mehnaz in *Show Business* and Asha Rani in *Starry Nights* do not consider the moral issues. Even their bodies become instrumental in materializing their dreams. They do not hesitate to have sex. Tharoor has satirized these women who prefer to offer their bodies to get a role as a favour to the producers. Tharoor satirizes the women:

...She looked on sex as some sort of divine gift to women, a commodity that was easy to offer, cost nothing to give and brought in great rewards... ‘Imagine if some producer wanted me to sweep his floors instead, or clean out his bathroom. Now that

would be much more difficult. I'd hate to do that, even for a role.

But to give him sex? It's easy, and sometimes it's even fun.' (55)

It is not only heterosexual sex that is very common in Bollywood. Even gay and lesbian sex is no exception there. Asha's lesbian relationship with Linda is again another attack on the glamorous life of Bollywood.

Tharoor seems to have a special liking for cricket as he reminisces playing this game with his brother Ashwin. Ashok has defeated Ashwin in the political world as he did in the game of cricket. The metaphor for his defeat even in the political world appears when Ashok suddenly joins the politics and beats him. Tharoor records the compliance of his brother in the following lines:

'Ashok bhai,' he says at last, looking me directly in the eye, 'you know what is my most abiding recollection of playing cricket with you, my elder brother, role model and hero? It was of you, five years older than me, deciding to bat first, making me bowl for what seemed like hours in the hot sun, and then...you wouldn't have to bowl to me. (210)

Tharoor's interest in cricket and superstars opens a new dimension to see this novel from the point of view of the postmodern narrative. There is a lot of hagiography about the actors and superstars. Tharoor's use of satire makes the reader see these characters in a different light from a different angle. The same views are also put forward by Mandar Talvekar in a review:

Show Business is postmodern at another level as well. In India there's a lot of hagiography about our public figures, especially our cricketers and superstars of our films (Politicians have now lost out on this idolization, though we still do it with those who fought for our freedom). Satire and parody enable a writer to make the reader view this hagiography in a new light..." (Talvekar)

Tharoor also stresses the relationship of the political world with the so called smugglers. The novel shows that even the government needs the smuggler to win the election that establishes the relationship between politicians and antisocial elements. It becomes a source of satire on politics. Kulbhushan, a senior leader, unfolds many secrets of the government when he says:

But ironies don't stop here, since in our country... but Bombay's most successful smuggler is avidly sought after for campaign contributions by every party, including mine...get support from both the beneficiaries and violators of these laws at election time, buy goods from the smugglers and sell them in their films...versus evil. (pp 117-118)

Tharoor has the same purpose in writing this novel as Shobha De does. Both of them try to find and establish a connection between Bollywood, politics and the underworld. Shobha De has shown the involvement of politics

with the Bollywood and under world. This relationship is represented by Amir Chand, a politician who is enmeshed in the underworld as well as in Bollywood. He funds the movie of Asha Rani with whom he has sexual relations. It supports the belief that Bollywood gets its budget from the underworld for the most expensive movies. Jennifer Takhar writes in an article:

The marvelous world of Bollywood also attracts organized crime members, and indeed some films have been financed by the moguls of Bombay's underworld, who may be responsible for facilitating the meteoric rise of certain starlets. According to the findings of BBC radio 4 guest reporter Sanjeev Bhaskar organized crime members tell producers to pick up certain actresses. (Takhar)

Tharoor has treated Bollywood and politics in the same way. He asserts the fact that both of the institutions present the image of an India which never existed and can never exist. Like actors, politicians also present a make-believe India before the people to get their votes. Kulbhushan comments on the political world:

And yet, I suppose, our worlds are not that far apart all. You function amidst fantasies, playing your assigned role in a make-believe India that has never existed and can never exist. As a politician I too play a role in a world of make-believe, a world in which I pretend that the ideas and principles and values which

brought me into politics can still make a difference. Perhaps I too am performing, Ashok, in an India that has never really existed and can never exist. (118)

Tharoor seems to be against the ideology of socialism. He has already expressed his dissatisfaction with the policies of Nehru. He has criticized him and parodied him as a blind Prime Minister in his *The Great Indian Novel*. He seems to criticize more or less the same policies even in this novel. Through his character, Kulbhushan, he expresses his dissatisfaction with socialism:

...I rose steadily, ...if I had shown just a little more patience with the arrant nonsense spouted by our in-house socialist ideologues, I might be as a Cabinet Minister today, or at least have spent some of my Minister of State days in a more important ministry like Home.... (pp 119-120)

Tharoor's only political figure of the novel, Kulbhushan, seems to be rather idealistic and honest. He stands apart from Amir Chand, the political figure, created by Shobha De in *Starry Nights* who is a corrupt politician and a man of the underworld.

Tharoor shatters some myths of contemporary India when he attacks its political institutions and the Bollywood world. He has done the same in *The Great Indian Novel* where primarily he has dealt with the characters of the independence struggle. Tharoor has always been fascinated by the past of

India. Sometimes he goes back to ancient India and tries to find a parallel with its historicity, politics and morality.

Tharoor has focused attention on a very important aspect of the corruption of Bollywood. He highlights the prevalent “black money” with the actors, directors and producers. They deposit it in a Swiss bank to avoid tax. He is so obsessed with this idea of “black money” that he even asks his father how the politicians manage it. This episode exposes the fact that actors and politicians too have “black money” though Ashok’s father denies the fact: “...You know there are lots of things people can do with their, uh, white money, but how do your political friends handle the black?” (139)

Ashok wishes to rule the world of politics as he did Bollywood. He wanted to be a King of the political world as well. His pride was indescribably hurt when he was given a back seat in the parliament. He could not enjoy the same kind of authority in the political world as he did in Bollywood. This hostile treatment made him abandon politics.

Tharoor presents the image of an ideal wife through Maya who wears a cotton sari and campaigns for Ashok. Tharoor shows how Maya becomes extremely helpful in his election as people are fascinated by her simple beauty. Tharoor juxtaposes the characters of Maya and Mehnaz and satirizes Mehnaz for her glamorous life style. She would never have come to campaign with Ashok and visit the ordinary people as Ashok states:

...I watch her in action, ever the dutiful housewife, and realize once more what an asset she is as a wife. To think, for instance, of Mehnaz in this role, with her exquisitely painted face and nails, her skills and her urban chatter, is inconceivable: she would lose me ten votes for every one her glamour obtained. Whereas Maya is, as always in public, perfect in the role. (206)

Tharoor has also thrown light on a very important aspect of Indian politics that is fully based on caste, creed and faith. He seems to satirize the election process of India, the cause of the present political bankruptcy. The politicians who do not belong to the same caste also have their own tricks to win an election by cheating the people:

The consensus of the professionals seems to be that the Pandit has too many groups committed to him: the Brahmins because he is a Brahmin, the minorities because he is known as a champion of the minorities, the poor because he can always blame the party in power for their poverty.... (207)

Though the narrator maintains a serious tone throughout the novel, yet he shows the occasional humorous moments which produce laughter. Humour here is more obscene and satiric when Ashok is commented upon by Radha Sabins for having produced three daughters:

...Even Radha Sabins, whose tone is getting slightly bitchy again since I've failed to make a habit of giving her champagne and submitting to rape, mentioned it in her Cheetah column: 'Darlings, Ashok Banjara may not be able to teach Dustin Hoffman much as an actor, but he has certainly turned out to be a pretty good producer, eh? Triplets, and all girls at that! Well, the Hungry Young Man would never be satisfied with just one woman in his life, would he? Grrrow....' (129)

Ashok tries to hug Mehnaz and kiss her before the movie crew even after the shooting of the movie is over. It shows his intense desire to translate his pride into sexual assault, the hidden unconscious will to behave like a King. He has the vicarious self-satisfaction of possessing her in his arms as the whistle blows and lights are off:

I am still holding her when the whistle blows. As the lights are switched off, I take her face in my hands, and in full view of the entire unit, kiss her full—bloodedly on the mouth. She does not pull herself away from me; I can feel her nipples harden against my shirt. Her tongue darts between my teeth, and my hands caress the small of her back, pressing her body into mine.... (136)

Shobha De unveils some bitter, incredible and disgusting truths about the Bollywood. The life of actresses which seems to be very glamorous is full of illusion and bitterness. Asha Rani was treated no better than a slut. Her own

mother was an agent who solicited good customers for her own daughter. Asha was surprised as well as hurt when she happened to overhear her mother talking to Kishenbhai, another agent:

...Amma was saying: 'I don't mind your sending Baby here and there, I know it's all part of the business. I trust you. But what about her health? These men, are they all right? Do you know if they are diseased? We must take baby for a proper check-up. We have some money now. You are keeping a track of all her earnings, aren't you?' (De 248)

Shobha De and Tharoor have been very harsh to Bollywood because of its dark side. It may be Mehnaz Elahi, Abha, Radha Sabins, Asha Rani or her younger sister Sudha but all of them are the victims of the godfathers of Bollywood. Bollywood has a very dark face. Both of these novelists have unveiled this dark face of the Bollywood.

Mehnaz's commentary on the so called glamorous life of Ashok affirms Tharoor's criticism of Bollywood. Unlike many of the actors of Bollywood, Ashok fails to make a distinction between art and realism, reel life and real life, screen and home. Tharoor shows how unglamorous a star can be in his personal life:

...I think that what matter to you is your image. The way you see yourself is the way others see you. It doesn't matter what kind of

husband or father you are, the important thing is that you're seen as a husband and father. You are all those roles you play on the screen, aren't you, Ashok? But what that 'you' is nobody knows.... (190)

These so called iconic figures are very selfish in their personal lives. Ashok sexually exploits Radha Sabins and Mehnaz Elahi. Sex is so mechanical for him. Ashok, in no way, was better than Akshay of *Starry Nights*. He also had illicit relationships with Asha Rani and then subsequently with other women.

Tharoor deals with the psyche of the suffering women who are sexual victims. Like Akshay, Ashok too never cared for the feelings of the women. These so called actors who are shown as loyal, caring and a symbol of moral values on the screen are devoid of these attributes in their personal lives. Mehnaz's complaint to Ashok shows her frustration in these lines:

So then I realized that your mind was somewhere else entirely, once your body had spent itself in me and that you weren't listening to a word I was saying...I wanted to give you to make myself truly and completely yours, the private doors I was opening to let you into my world and not just into my body, none of these things had made the slightest dent in your consciousness.... (192)

Tharoor and Shobha De have talked about Islam in their novels to show another ugly face of Bollywood. The actors revert to religion to have multiple sex partners. Islam does not sanction any conversion done for the sake of only marrying multiple partners. Salma, one of the characters in *Show Business*, expresses her views that it was easier for Ashok to marry Mehnaz if he converts to Islam: "...I mean, I never expected you to leave your prissy little malnourished wife, but if you were a Muslim you could legally have two wives, know what I mean? Instead...but God's...." (184)

The same are the views of Shobha De expressed in *Starry Nights* when Asha Rani advises Akshay to convert to Islam for the same purpose. Asha explains to Akshay:

'...We can both become Muslims! It's easy. First, we get converted to the faith by a Kazi, change our names, and then perform the nikah—that's all it takes. That way, there doesn't have to be a divorce or anything! I'll be your legally wedded second wife. Muslims can have four, but you'd better stop with me.' (De, pp 309-310)

The views expressed by Tharoor and Shobha De contradict the real spirit of Islam. These marriages are never legal from the point of view of Islam though some of the people convert to Islam for the same reasons.

As discussed earlier, Hindi cinema is very much a representation of Indian society. Art imitates life and defamiliarizes certain aspects. Tharoor continuously reminds the readers that Indian cinema is a metaphor for Indian society:

‘India cinema has many remarkable affinities to Indian religion,’ he intones...For just as the Hindu notion of time runs cynically, repeating itself endlessly, so also Hindi cinema consists of endless repeated variations of a few basic themes. The Indian film is the idealized representation of the Indian attitude of the world.’ (pp 211-212)

Tharoor has shown a very important aspect of Indian mythology which is an integral part of Indian culture and civilization. Indian mythology has always celebrated the triumph of good over evil. Indian movies also support as well as promote the triumph of good over evil:

‘Now is this not also what the Hindi film does? In all Hindi films there is only one theme—the triumph of good over evil...Therein lies the subconscious appeal of the Hindi film to the Indian imagination, and the appeal, along with it, of the Hindi film hero.’ (213)

Tharoor has been greatly interested in the glorious past of India. He acknowledges that the problems of present can be solved by returning to the

past of Indian mythology. He finds *The Mahabharata* to be a masterpiece of Indian mythology. He stresses the fact that Indians derive their lessons and sense of righteousness from this epic as it is the only epic of its stature that can guide the people even today. Tharoor states that the Hindi films borrow so much from this great epic as Tool Diwedi, the Guru, one of the characters of the novel asserts:

‘You would be right, my dears, in tracing the modern Hindi film to the epics and myths of our ancient times,’ the Guru goes on. ‘Each character fulfils the role assigned to him in the Film as each of us fulfills the role assigned to us by our destiny on this earth, our dharma. The Hindi film hero’s dharma is to be a hero, the villain’s to be a villain...Their dharma determines their character and their character determines their destiny...This is the concept you can apply in to the Hindi film hero. (215)

Tharoor seems to be critical of the role of the religious teachers in society. They are treated as gods. He satirizes the hypocrisy of the religious world by choosing as a character an old college mate of Ashok who has studied Hindu philosophy at Banaras Hindu University and is known as Guru, the religious teacher in the town. He is more interested in materialism than spiritualism. Tharoor presents the life of the Guru in an ironical way:

The Guru scratches his bottom through the robe. ‘I’ll answer that philosophically some other time,’ he replies. ‘But the short

answer is, I'm getting rather tired of the rural life. Too many mosquitoes, and not enough electricity. I'm thinking of making a move.' (218)

Tharoor highlights the materialistic attitude of these so called spiritual people who are hypocrites and misguide the society. The physical description of his disciple, a French woman, arouses more sexual than spiritual feelings. It would certainly be difficult for a materialistic Guru to resist the desires of flesh: "The French woman looks disapprovingly back towards us. I notice she is uncommonly pretty, and that under her thin cotton robe she is braless" (212).

Tharoor criticizes both the god men and the superstars as there is no difference between Ashok Banjara and the Guru. They are hypocrites and adulterers. Guru explores the sexual opportunities with French women while Ashok does the same with the actresses of the Bollywood. It is ironic to see the characters of the novel like Guru justify their sexual behavior and perceived immoral activities with reference to religious scriptures and mythology:

'...The scriptures are full of examples of the noble Heroes of our epics sleeping with more than one Woman,' he intones. 'Krishna is the obvious example – he loved 16,000 women, it is reliably recorded, and fathered, less reliably, 80,000 sons. His greatest consort, his affair with whom is immortalized in painting ...was a married woman, Radha. Deception was therefore essential, though it was easier for a god than for other adulterers: when

Krishna once spotted Radha's husband shadowing her to one of their nocturnal trysts...so that the spying cuckold saw his wife in adoration of his own favorite deity!' (220)

Tharoor has satirized not only cinema and the political world throughout this novel but also the mythical world. He has attacked even the gods for being involved in erotic pleasure with many women. He even attacks the heroes of *The Mahabharata* like Arjun and Yudhishtir for having more than one wife and thus being disloyal to their wives. The ancient Hindu mythology had reconciled that practice although medieval and modern Hindu society do not approve of polygamy. The same practice, if found in the modern Hindu society, is considered to be an expression of lecherous behavior than being the attributes of God.

Tharoor shows how these glamorous actors fail in their lives on the personal front. The star whether he is Ashok of *Show Business* or Akshay of *Starry Nights*, only believes in materialism and glamour as conjugal relationships have no value and meaning for them. Ashwin, the brother of Ashok, complains about neglecting his friends and family because he was too much obsessed with his own glamorous world:

I told her about your Sponerwalla ...How unimportant people are to you. People don't really matter to you, Ashok; they never have. With no exceptions: not Dad, not Ma, not me. not even your kids—and certainly not Maya...Why bother to take the

trouble to say farewell when you don't really care if the other person fares well or not? (pp 245-246)

Ashok who is the star of the Bollywood world and is known throughout the country is known very little in his own home. He never found enough time to spend with his daughters. Ashok Banjara, lying on the death bed after an accident, could never be closer to his daughters:

...The girls, your triplets, have taken it rather well. Rather too well...You're hardly real yourself: They have seen more of you on the screen than in the flesh. You haven't spent much time with them at home or anywhere else...You were, you are, a larger than life figure to millions, but to the few around you, you weren't quite as large as life. (252)

Tharoor criticizes the artificial world which is represented by the movies repeatedly. The movies are not a real medium of instructing the people; rather the heroes of the movies like *Mechanic* misguide the youth as the narrator states:

...Can you imagine for a second a real Indian mechanic in a romantic entanglement with a real Mehnaz Elahi? It's impossible: all these rich girl-poor boy fantasies the Hindi films churn out fly in the face of every single class...Just giving the lower classes the wrong ideas...where else could all these lower-class Romeos

have picked up the idea that the kind of well-dressed woman they once wouldn't have dared to look at is suddenly accessible to them? (248)

Unlike the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht's concept of epic theatre which focuses on alienation effect, the Indian cinema does not allow the viewers to develop their objective assessment. The Indian cinema does not create any critical distance in the spectators to take an action against them. They simply accept the state of society and behavior as represented on the stage.

The Indian cinema does not help people to arouse their critical faculties and judge the representation of the characters on the stage. It does not prevent emotional identification. The audiences do not use their critical faculty but rather their emotional involvement makes them a passive receiver. That is why unlike German theatre, the Indian theatre creates more problems in the society rather than it solves them. Novels like *Show Business* of Tharoor or *Starry Nights* of Shobha De expose the truth of this so called glamorous world. Tharoor has been very critical of Indian movies as he speaks through his character Ashwin in the novel:

‘...Films in India are truly the opiate of the people; by providing an outlet to their pent-up urges, the Bombay films make them forget the injustice of the oppressive social order. Evil is personalized in the Villain, rather than in the system which makes

Victim, not heroes, of us all. A false solution is found when the villain is vanquished, and the masses go home happy. The ownership and control of the means of production remain unchanged.' (254)

Works Cited

- Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th ed. Bangalore: Heinle, 1999.
- De, Shobha. *The Shobha De Omnibus*. New Delhi: Viking, 1995.
- Ganti, Tejaswini. *Bollywood : A Guide to Popular Hindi Cinma*. New York and London: Routledge Taylor and francis Group, 2004.
- Kumar, Nanda. "Multiplicity of Voices in the novels of Shashi Tharoor" 9 Oct 2007. 10 May 2011 <<http://nandantk.blogspot.com/2007/10/multiplicity-of-voices-in-novels-of.html>>
- McWilliam, Candia. "BOOK REVIEW / Bollywood still lives: Show Business by Shashi Tharoor: Picador, pounds 15.99" 29 May 1994. 10 May 2011 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/book-review--bollywood-still-lives-show-business-by-shashi-tharoor-picador-pounds-1599-1439358.html>>
- Sandhu, Sukhdev. "In a Cinema near you" 20 Apr 2002. 10 May 2011 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4727696/In-a-cinema-near-you.html>>
- Takhar, Jennifer. "Identity Through Bollywood Cinema: The Reel or Real Zone?" Issue No.5, October 2002. 10 Jul 2011. <http://www.sikhspectrum.com/102002/j_bollywood.htm>
- Talvekar, Mandar. "Book Review: *Show Business - A Novel* by Shashi Tharoor" 11 Aug 2006. 10 May 2011 <<http://inkscrawl.blogspot.com/2006/08/book-review-show-business-novel-by.html>>
- Tharoor, Shashi. *Show Business*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1991. (All the references to this chapter have been indicated by page number only.)

CHAPTER 5

Debunking Stereotypes and Myths: *The Five-Dollar Smile and Other Stories*

Tharoor's collection of short stories *The Five Dollar Smile and Other Stories* contains stories written on different subjects and themes: death, loss, hypocrisy, deceit, dishonor, family, adultery, poverty, pre-marital and extra-marital affairs and so on. His approach to these issues proves him to be an expert of human psyche. Although the stories were written during his teenage, yet they seem to reveal the experiences of an adult who has seen much of life and faced its travails.

Like most of his novels *Show Business*, *The Great Indian Novel* and *Riot*, here too, he satirizes different social, moral and political institutions. His primary focus in his stories is to reveal the truth of human relationships. The myths of contemporary times get a harsh treatment at his hands. Most of the stories show curiosities of teenagers about sex and love. Tharoor hungers to know the truth of a hypocritical society.

The stories show the cultural and linguistic colonization of India through western education. The stories have different subjects, but one can easily find the recurrence of certain themes like adultery, sexual relations, poverty, and hypocrisy. The book is a combination of real stories and real issues. It does not

take the readers to another world of fantasy; rather it exposes the true picture of the real world. Every story has suspense and a twist.

The collection of the stories starts with a heart-wrenching story “Five-Dollar Smile”. It portrays a seven years old orphan boy named Joseph who has become the poster boy for HELP. He has modelled for “All it takes is five dollars a month to bring smile on his face”. The story throws light on the extreme poverty that the country was passing through during the time of emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi.

The story throws light on the miserable condition of the boy Joseph who was adopted by a relief agency and was misused by it to make money. He was not allowed even to eat properly. Sister Celine threatens him while dragging him around:

‘Later, child. Now behave yourself.’ He was dragging his feet and she was pulling him quiet firmly by the left hand. “And if you don’t walk properly I shall have to take the cane to you.” He straightened up quickly; he knew the cane well and did not want it again. (*Five Dollar Smile and Other Stories*, 5)

Tharoor presents here the real face of so-called relief agencies which claim to provide facilities to under-privileged children through the money they collect in their names, but they do not even let the children eat properly.

Tharoor also tries to portray the psychological condition of the poor boy. He was tormented by the people in the relief agency. He was teased by his mates for being poor and fetching money in the name of poverty. He deals with the mental condition of a child. His underprivileged status soon became a joke for other people as the narrator states:

The slogan soon became a joke. "Smile, Joseph, smile," his friends would tease him. And if he was in a particularly angry mood, one of the boys would ask with mock gravity, "Has anyone got five dollars?" Sometimes Joseph would only get angrier, but sometimes he would be provoked to smile at them. They used to call it the five-dollar smile. (9)

In his next story "The Boutique", Tharoor again deals with the issues of abject poverty and class consciousness originating from the economic inequality in the society. He has not only portrayed here the financial complications of middle class society, but also the unjust treatment they receive at the hands of the society. The story centers round an old woman Amma and her boy. The writer shows how the salesgirl treats them at the shop in an insulting manner as she calculates their status by their appearance: "'Here, you can't touch the articles,' the salesgirl said, coming up behind Amma suddenly. 'Can't you see the sign?' she pointed to a PLEASE DON'T TOUCH card among the clothes. 'Don't you know English?'" (21)

Tharoor shows here the unprofessional attitude of the salesgirl and the way she deals with the poor old woman and the rich radio disc jockey. She gives him special attention for being rich.

The story "Auntie Rita" gives an insight into the hypocrisy and deceitful attitude of a middle aged house wife. It also deals with the sexual curiosities of a teenager boy, Arjun. He comes to spend his vacations at his uncle's home and falls in love with his own aunt. The love is based on infatuation and lust of a teenager. The seventeen year old boy in the story "Auntie Rita" discovers his sexuality and experiments it with his own aunt Rita who enjoys the wild sexual passion of a teenager. It also shows the attitude and hypocrisy of a sexually dissatisfied wife whose husband often goes out of station.

The boy is an inexperienced sexual partner. He does not have any knowledge about contraceptives. He is advised by her aunt to have a condom the next time he comes to her. The nervousness of the boy while standing in a druggist shop also produces a keen sense of humour.

The sexually starved boy reflects the age of Tharoor who was also in his late twenties while writing this story. The display of sexual fantasies and a strong desire to discover sexual bliss with a female body shows the strong biological urges of teenagers that Tharoor himself may have been passing through at that time.

Arjun finds his sexual rival in his own uncle when the latter has sex with his wife. Arjun wants to replace him. The boy feels so sexually excited on hearing the very sounds of love making that he begins to imagine himself in the bed with aunt Rita. Tharoor shows the obsession of an adolescent with sex:

...The doors on the other side shut once or twice, but his never opened. He could hear voices, and, worse, noises; sounds of love from a throat he had thought was his own. Finally, as his desperation mounted, he tiptoed to the bathroom door and listened.... "Ouch!—no, no, darling....My God....Oh, you are a devil...." (145)

Another story in this collection entitled "The Other Man", also throws light on the premarital affair of a woman. Tharoor seems to subvert the traditional concept of Indian society which was based on moral and ethical values. The Western influence on the Indian society has disintegrated the smooth social fabric of cultural and moral values. The husband in the story "The Other Man" is jealous of a man named Arvind. His wife had a youthful fling with him. She could not overcome it even after being married to another man. Tharoor deals with the mental state of the husband in this story as he complains to the ex-lover of his wife in these lines:

I know what you look like. I see you in my nightmares, in the other half of my mind when I think of her. I see you in her eyes when she speaks of you, and you are a wall between us I cannot

surmount...You will look like a man who feels he ought to be recognized. (129)

Tharoor has debunked the myth of an ideal wife as she could never give him the love that he deserved to get. Tharoor uses a wonderful metaphor of Mona Lisa for this woman. Her smile was so mysterious that nobody could make out what it really was:

She did not reply to your letter...I loved her then in a strange, new kind of way, as one loves finely- turned sentence in a book that one wishes one could write knows one can't...For perhaps that was what made her what she was, a Mona Lisa. And I could never reach her smile. (131)

The lady was as mysterious as Mona Lisa and it was difficult for the husband to make out when she smiled or whether she really smiled? All his life the husband had to love a woman who was in love with someone else. The husband is very disappointed when he comes to know the son born to his wife was of her old lover. It also shows how premarital affairs, particularly the sexual relations, affect the life of the people after their marriage:

But perhaps you will not...That she chose at all to marry me when she was still yours. For there is one thing that I know you will never learn and that the world will never tell you. That six months after she became my wife, she bore me your son. (132)

In the story titled “The Village Girl”, Tharoor has thrown light on the clash between western education and traditional values. He shows how the parents get upset when they find their traditional culture is on the verge of extinction. Their children who are educated in a convent school do not care much about the core traditional values. They find them obsolete.

The father wants to preserve their cultural values while it does not make a difference for the son. Every year, without exception, his parents dragged him all the way down to their village homes in Kerala.

The story also contains some autobiographical elements as Tharoor also belongs to the same place and has received his education in Delhi and Mumbai. He was far from his motherland Kerala. The experiences of Sunder can be related to the experiences of Tharoor himself. Tharoor knows well the heterogeneity of the cultures as he has also been in USA and has experienced fully the loss of cultural values in a foreign land.

The important question to note is whose identity Sunder’s father is talking about? Is a child born with any sort of identity in this world? A child is never born with an identity. He gets his identity from the socio-cultural environment he is brought up in, no matter whether it is Indian or Western. In the 21st century culture and specific identities are losing their existence.

Another important issue that Tharoor has raised in this story is that of arranged marriages. The problem with this sort of arranged marriages is that

the parents hardly care for the cultural and educational orientation of their children. A village girl is brought up in different environment. She cannot adjust with the boy who is brought up in a metropolitan city like Delhi. Their cultural and educational orientations are totally different from each other. The cultural difference between Kerala and Delhi is as huge as the difference between East and West. The marriage of Sunder with a village girl symbolizes the marriage of East with West, and that certainly produces cultural shocks and conflicts.

The generation gap becomes wider gradually in India because the parents, despite being highly educated, are not yet in a position to give up the traditional and cultural roots that form and preserve their identity. The increasing influences of western ways of life have made Indians more conscious of their identity than before. Tharoor is concerned about the cultural dominance of the West on the Eastern and South Asian countries, particularly India. Western culture through the movies and the educational system is changing the picture of contemporary India in the future.

Tharoor, as a critic and historian of contemporary life, attempts to present both the negative and positive aspects of this cultural transformation through his fiction and non-fiction works. Tharoor's fascination with the past confirms this fear. He prefers the rich cultural and ethical past of India. This fear is generally expressed through the characters of Tharoor's novels and

stories. Narayani Amma, one of the traditional characters in the story, “The Village Girl” expresses the same kind of fear:

But Narayani Amma was not once to let silence endure...she had now turned the powerful floodlights of her larynx on the dark sins of the younger generation. “You don’t know what things are coming to here,” she declaimed. “Just as bad as Hollywood, I tell you. Why, in karanad Chandrika chechi’s very street in Chittilamchery, well, in the street just behind hers, a Nair committed suicide by drinking pesticide. Seems she had been having an affair with, you won’t believe this, an Ezhava boy, a common farmhand they wouldn’t have allowed in their house. Someone told Chandrika chechi the girl found out she was pregnant, but of course she had to be cremated quickly, so no one will ever know.... (39)

Tharoor focuses on the premarital affairs in the Indian society. Love, sex and deceit seem to be one of the favorite themes of Tharoor. He often discusses these grim issues and attacks the contemporary myths of love, sex, loyalty etc.

As Tharoor takes into consideration the consequences of Western culture on Indian society, one of the serious consequences is the problem of inter-caste and interfaith marriages. Love affairs which are very common in the West are not so common in traditional Indian society. In this story another girl falls in love with a Muslim boy, and is not allowed to marry him because she is

Hindu by faith. Her family gives a good beating to the Muslim boy but the girl still refuses to marry anyone else:

...Why, just the other week old Gopan Nair's daughter... told her parents, after they had arranged her wedding and everything, that she was in love with a – can you believe it, in love?—with a Rauther fellow in her class, a Muslim if you please. Can you imagine? They had to stop her sending to school...that girl of his is still refusing to marry anyone....” (40)

Modern education and modern approaches to life are in conflict with the traditional environment of India. It becomes difficult to strike a balance between tradition and modernity. Tharoor has portrayed a vivid description of this culturally imbalanced society in his stories. He fears that India might lose its traditional and cultural identity as a consequence of this modern education. His characters become instrumental in sounding this sort of fear in his stories as the village girl states:

‘You see, you are not really Malyali anymore.’ She drew in her own breath at her boldness and asked anxiously, “I hope I am not, how do you say, offending you, Sunder etta?” He shook his head, smiling. ‘But really, it is very English there, in the city, isn’t it? I mean western. Modern. Like England and America.’ (44)

The words of Sunder reveal his preoccupation with the western culture and its admiration. They also express contempt for traditional Indian culture which is losing its meaning and relevance. Tharoor has attacked the myth of modern India, which is no longer India any more in her character, approach and spirit. Tharoor glorifies the past of India in his works. He presents it as a substitute for the problems of modern India. Tharoor has also debunked another part of the myth of city life where there are no patriotic feelings among the people. The younger generation prefers to have Western identity. There is only imitation of the West and the concept of nationalism is fading away.

Tharoor seems to be very familiar with the economic realities and traditional outlook of lower middle class village families. The discrimination is still found in the village and remote areas. Families still take the education of boys more seriously than those of girls. Tharoor debunks the myth of modern India which claims to provide an equal treatment and opportunities to boys and girls. He attempts to reveal that girls are still marginalized in society: their education is still neglected in modern India. Boys' education is still preferred. Like a satirist, his aim is to throw light on the imperfection of the middle class. In the story 'The Village Girl', the village girl feels dissatisfied with her parents who treat her and her brother differently as she states:

‘I—no, I am not going to college,’ she replied in a low voice, looking down at the floor as if ashamed of her answer. ‘I did well in my SSLC, but my father—my Father, he does not believe in

college education for me...he can only afford the fees for one child and my brother is more important, he is doing B.S. in agriculture...It is costing a lot, my brother has failed twice already...What is a girl going to do with a college degree anyway, my Amma says, will it help me make better idlis for my husband?’ (46)

Tharoor has also talked about the arranged marriages in his stories. He satirizes the institution of arranged marriage as he has done in the story “The Other Man”. The girl has no choice. She is not even asked about her choice and is forcibly married.

The village girl who is frustrated at this approach of her parents towards her education and arranged marriage begins to cry. Sunder who is a city educated boy tries to wipe her tears when she suddenly kisses his palm. She did not know the dark side of that glamorous world that Sunder was presenting before her. It is an artificial and hypocritical world. Sunder took advantage of that ignorant village girl by seeking to quench his lust:

He saw the tears slowly overflow her eyes and begin to trickle down her cheeks...With a sudden movement she caught it and kissed his palm...It fell upon her breast, and after that there was nothing anymore he could do to prevent what happened. (48)

Tharoor has debunked here the myth of sincere and honest people symbolized by Sunder. Tharoor throws light on his selfishness, hollowness and sexual corruption. Sunder represents the real face of that materialistic land of fantasy. It has no moral values, religious attitude or social commitment. Sunder, symbolizing a male chauvinist, has broken the framework of the modern and western world. Tharoor has broken the myth of that modern world which is very hollow in its nature when he writes:

Neither of them spoke a word. When they had arranged their clothes and begun to walk ...He, the experienced city slicker, he with the smooth talk and the plastic fantasies and the fishnet T-shirt, had cynically taken advantage of an innocent village girl. She had sought admission to his world, and he had taken her body... He had ruined her. He had destroyed the illusions of a simple village girl, a nervous, trusting young thing who called him Sunder etta. (48)

Sunder feels nervous and does not understand how to respond to the girl and face her. He, very sincerely, wanted to apologize:

They reached the veranda of the main house. In a few steps they would be at the door way of the living room, and it would be too late to say anything. He could not leave everything unsaid, even if expiation was impossible. He caught her by the arm and, in a

strangled voice, spoke the only words that occurred to him.

“I’m sorry,” he said. (48)

Tharoor has satirized the myth of the simple village girl who did not object to sexual advancement of Sunder; rather she enjoyed her first sexual experience:

She had taken the first step...It was lit up in the radiance of dreams fulfilled, and her smile was no longer that of a nervous girl, but of a woman who had touched a happiness she had not expected to be hers. (pp 48-49)

Tharoor has written another story “A City Girl”, on the same theme. He treats the same subject, and addresses the same issues, yet he has changed the role of the characters in the story. He has juxtaposed the characters of the village girl with the city girl here and the character of the city boy with the village boy. The story deals with the same issues of modern education, Western culture and a serious threat to India’s cultural heritage. Here again Tharoor has debunked many popular myths of city education, city girl and village boy.

A critical analysis of these two stories makes it clear that Tharoor intends to tell his readers how the upbringings as well as educational and social environment help people form their socio-cultural, moral, religious and gender stereotypes. It affects the way they judge the society, its practices and values. The life of a village girl is decided by her family. The family decides whom she

has to marry. Her life has nothing to do with the outer world. She is born in a village and dies at the same place.

The village girl is not allowed to dream or to realize her dreams because her dreams are contrary to the traditional codes of the society. She cannot live her life the way she wants to because that goes against the spirit of moral and a civilized society.

For the village girl, sex is something related to marriage and that comes only after marriage while for the city girl, sex has nothing to do with marriage and it hardly leads to marriage. No doubt, the case is the same with the village boy and city boy too.

He has shown the effects of modern city education on both boys and girls and their sense of liberty and individualism. It is difficult for the village people to digest it. One such example is the act of smoking by the city girl which is quite normal for the city girl, but a social stigma for the village boy. It is clear when he nervously reacts to the smoking of the girl:

‘It is not that,’ Shantan replied, as she shook the match out, sending scudding shadows across his expressionless face. ‘It is wrong for lady to smoke. In Indian culture, you would be being considered bad woman.’ (59)

Tharoor has attacked the myth of a city girl. She is considered decent because of being well educated, yet she is opposite to what is expected of her.

He has also attacked the notion of modern education which has made the students smokers and drug-addicts and reduced them to a generation of frustrated people. Moreover, modern and western style education has deprived the students of the knowledge of their traditional and moral values. They know nothing about real India and their cultural roots. They are losing their identity with the advent of western style education:

His eyes became troubled... "I am knowing nothing much about your modern city life," he admired softly. "But I am knowing about real India, Indian society and culture. I am knowing who I am, Sandy. Are you knowing who you are?" (60)

The village boy could not cope with the world of the city girl because it was something incredible for him and he could not reconcile this experience with the behavior of the city girl. It was beyond the comprehension of the village boy to imagine that a girl might have multiple sex partners before marriage. She is proud of what she does in her own unique way.

Tharoor has shown how hypocritical and mean people can be with their own set of beliefs and customs. He debunks the myth of the sincere village boy who has been criticizing the western ways of living. The village boy attempts to rape her when the girl, somehow, saves herself from the strong grip of the village boy:

He had no idea what he was doing: the kiss was hungry but inexperienced...He would not let her go, holding her upper arms in immensely powerful grip that tightened as she struggled to free herself. "Stop it!" she breathed...She tried to push him away, but he was too strong. She kicked him, but with the force of his body he simply pressed her legs more tightly against the wall...she flung herself away from him. (64)

The boy wanted to enter the fantasy world of the city girl, but did not know how to do it. He felt so confident of her response that he tried to satisfy his sexual urges with her. She could not realize why the boy did so.

The girl attempted to free herself from the grip of the boy and criticized him. She had an unconscious desire to make love to him as it would have been a different experience for her to make love to a village boy: "He smiled sadly at her, and she was suffused...she realized both that he would not try to kiss her again, and that she would not resist him if he did" (66).

Tharoor has also mentioned the effects of modern and western style education in the story "Pyre". The whole story centers round the accident of a college boy Surjeet Kumar. He lost control of his scooter while driving with his friend Raminder. He received injuries but survived. The story contains some elements of the illicit relationship with his girlfriend Mira in college days. The story shows how modern and higher education have affected the approach of the youth towards love and sex. Tharoor seems to be preoccupied with the

theme of sexual relationships since he talks about this subject in most of his work:

And then I thought of Mira. Mira, the girl he screwed And I wished I could; Mira, the General's daughter, sultry, exciting, unattainable ... Mira who was so much in love with the one guy who didn't give a damn about her, Mira who defied society with a toss of her head and bedded the grandson of a cobbler, Mira who let him hump her regularly in the little room next to mine in the dormitory while I sat on my side of the wall and tried to read. What would Mira do? (114)

Tharoor has been dealing these issues repeatedly in his stories. The sexual fantasies and fascination of a teenager are clearly reflected in his stories. Tharoor has more or less dealt with the same kind of theme in his story "The Professor's Daughter" too. He describes the sexual fantasies of the college boys for the opposite sex. He has also thrown light here on hostel and campus life and the reactions of the students to their environment.

He has set this story in the background of a traditional environment. Harbhajan singh, a student in the story, gives a sexual description of the body of the Professor's daughter Jasvinder and a particularly attractive mole on her right buttocks. It had become a centre of sexual attraction among the boys:

They were both turned away from me. Jazzy was bent over the side of her bed, her salwar pulled down from her hips to bare her rear. Despite my shock I noticed, with the absurd precision of a man in a dream, that there was no mole on the exposed buttocks, left or right. (95)

He has also satirized the university Professor Chhatwal who never revised his notes and always dictated the same old notes to his students. He did not have any outstanding academic achievement to confirm his standing. Tharoor has satirized the whole system of higher education which does not impart any quality education. In a way, he has attacked all the institutions of learning and scholarship across the country.

Tharoor also throws light on the personal life of the professor, his traditional mindset and his obsolete approach to life. In spite of being a symbol of modern education and liberal approach, he was an extremely traditional person with no refined manners, no vision and no modern outlook. He was bringing up his own generation in an environment of fear. He never gave freedom to his daughter to make a decision herself. His daughter was very much afraid of him. She is afraid to talk to a boy visiting her home because she was not allowed even to converse with any male member of her neighborhood. Her fears show the environment she is brought up in.

Tharoor has taken into account middle class values here. The professor's approach to his daughter stands for the approach of millions of the fathers in the country. Education does not make any difference to them.

The act of beating his daughter reveals his own frustration with his life as he never understood what love and attraction mean. He was not satisfied with his married life. When something opposite to his beliefs and practices occurred, he just lost his temper. He was not ready to accept a change, no matter whether for good or bad. The beating symbolizes the cruelties done to women and how they are oppressed in the society.

Tharoor is critical of the professor because he could not reconcile his personal stand with the beliefs of modern education and liberal society. His daughter represents the cries of many of the girls and women who are the victims of male oppression:

With each stroke the girl flinched, vainly suppressing a cry. The tears streaming down her cheeks fell on her hands...the regular rise and fall of the ruler, the shuddering of girl's body, the mass of red blotches and welts multiplying across the pale posterior. And then the ruler broke...expression of calm and complacency.
(95)

Tharoor broke the myth of friendship in the story "Friends". He throws light on the fact how true friendship comes to an end when jealousy erupts. The

narrator feels envious of his favorite friend Vicky over another girl in the college.

They had to separate finally. Vicky never considered girls more than as a means of gratifying his sexual desires. He never took the girls seriously, and there was no quarrel between the two friends because of the girls as the narrator states: "...To us, girls were meant for light flirtations, to be occasionally brought up to one's room and given the once-over, to be used when possible to fulfill one's unavoidable biological desires...." (98)

Like other stories in this collection, this story also reveals the attitude of the younger generation toward sex and love. It reflects the immorality of the modern education imparted in the country showing where it lacks in its expectations. Tharoor here deals with the aspect of male jealousy as how the narrator, in spite of being a close friend of Vicky, had grown jealous of him because of this girl. The narrator states:

Rekha laughed, smiling at him, and I felt a sudden surge of jealousy coursing through me at Vicky thus having impressed her. But I couldn't think of a suitable comeback, and so kept quiet in wordless impotence. (104)

Tharoor has also attacked the theme of illicit relationships in his story "The Political Murder". A police inspector probes the murder of Gobinda Sen, an MLA who is murdered in his own home. Nayar, the police inspector, probes

his murder in a Sherlock Holmes style and arrests the handyman, a servant in the MLA's home. He was accused of murdering his master because he was having an illicit relationship with his wife. The murder actually was a political one, but the policeman was too obsessed with his detective bent of mind to see other possibilities.

He has also satirized the entire political system and illustrated its corruption. It is also evident how common the political murders are in the country, and how the investigation agencies are misled in most of the cases. Tharoor also shows the bureaucracy and political machines connect to carry out nefarious motives. In the case of this story, sub-inspector Jacob becomes the police commissioner while the inspector Nayar does not receive any promotion for being honest.

The existence of prevailing corrupt practices is made clear in the statement of the sub-inspector Jacob. His words are more than enough to prove the alliance of bureaucracy and the political world in promoting rather than controlling or discouraging the crime:

‘Guess, Nayar, just guess,’ Jacob replied. ‘Maybe you should start paying a little more attention to politics instead of playing Sherlock Holmes all the time. Then may be you’ll become deputy commissioner one day.’ (128)

Works Cited:

Tharoor, Shashi. *The Five-Dollar Smile and Other Stories*. New York: Arcade, 1990. (All the references to this chapter have been indicated by page number only.)

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

Tharoor has very proficiently dealt with the theme of history myth and fantasy in his writings. He has intelligently chosen *The Mahabharata* to critically analyze the modern political system of India. In *The Great Indian Novel*, Tharoor has very well described the theme of history and myth. The novel as a post modernist fiction focuses on many issues pertinent to the problems of present Indian political scenario. The novel fictionalizes history of almost ninety years from pre-independence to post-independence. Tharoor has employed satire and sarcasm as his weapons to attack as well as instruct the present political system.

The Mahabharata has actually been an intense enticement for Tharoor. The mythological characters have been modelled on the freedom fighters of India. Tharoor has specifically resorted to parody to achieve the effect of satire. The novel not only explains the history of India but also defamiliarises certain phases of Indian politics and myths. The mythical personalities are conferred a new recognition and identity by Tharoor. The juxtaposition of different characters brings out some similarities as well as differences between the mythical characters and historical personas. Ganga Dutta who represents Gandhi is the unique creation of Tharoor. He represents Bhishma of *The Mahabharata*. Gandhi is justly considered the hero of the epic as Ganga Dutta was the hero in Hastinapur.

The novel exemplifies the history of Independence struggle. Tharoor has given a burlesque treatment to many incidents like Jalianwala Bagh and Dandi March. These incidents are very well-known in the history of India. Tharoor has defamiliarised them which produces an aesthetic effect. Tharoor has justly regarded *The Mahabharata* to be a perfect medium to direct the present political system. *The Great Indian Novel* cannot be dissociated from the mythology as the novel comprehends the rich elements of mythology. The novel demonstrates an incredible fusion of history and myth.

The symmetry of the work lies in the fact that both the historical and mythical thread go together without interrupting the fascination of the novel. The dates of the mythology and history do not reconcile with each other yet they cannot be separated. What allures the readers is not the actualization of the dates but the fictionalization of certain events in the mythology and history of India.

The novel covers the history of 19th century. It describes the rule of the distinguished prime ministers from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi. The novelist has incredibly discovered wonderful metaphors in the mythology for modern, political and historical India.

The fictionalization of the partition of India is one of the most prominent episodes in the novel. From this point of view, *The Great Indian Novel* is not significant only for the history of India but also for the history of Pakistan. One fascinating point that is manifested during the study is that Tharoor has taken

the character of Jinnah very positively. Unlike many Indian historians, he has not reproached Jinnah for the partition. He has contemplated partition to be a collective blunder of Jinnah, Nehru and Patel.

Tharoor has very well analyzed the election process and emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi. He has exhibited how Mrs. Gandhi exploited democracy and that resulted into anarchy. Tharoor has displayed Indira Gandhi's interference with the electoral body and how she was brought to court after her party lost power. Tharoor accuses Indira Gandhi for exploiting Indian democracy. Draupadi symbolizes democracy. Tharoor has subtly picked Draupadi for the role of democracy. Tharoor has revealed that democracy is the Western concept very much accepted in Indian political system.

Tharoor has mimicked many incidents from the Indian mythology too. These incidents which are set in the context of colonial and post colonial history captivate the attention of the readers.

Therefore, it is very well established that Tharoor has included most of the prominent incidents, episodes and dignitaries from modern Indian history and parodied them. He has fictionalized history and mythology.

Tharoor's next novel is *Riot* (2001). Though the novel does not have components of myths yet it is marvellous in its treatment of history and fantasy. The novel specifically deals with the post colonial history. *Riot* is a wonderful example of a polyphonic novel as it comprises diverse voices in it. These

varied voices are incorporated with the help of newspaper articles, report writing, letters, diary entries, radio scripts, interview transcripts, scrap book entries, self-composed poetry and journal extracts. Besides, there are certain external voices which also help in the narration of the novel. These external voices provide historical, cultural, religious and political contexts to the novel. The novel cannot be isolated from these external voices.

The novel focuses on many issues of post colonial India. Like many of his contemporaries, Tharoor has also dealt with key issues of communalism and search for an identity. Communal disharmony has been a big challenge before the Indian government after partition.

The two big communities specifically Hindus and Muslims live in two different nations Indian and Pakistan. Hindus are a minority in Pakistan and Muslims are a minority in India. One of the biggest threats for both the countries is the internal one. The two communities often clash with each other and that results into huge number of casualties in the form of frequent riots.

Tharoor has placed this novel in the Indian context. The whole novel revolves round a communal riot in Zailgarh. In this riot, Priscilla, an American girl was killed. She was on HELP US project in India. She is a fictional character. The novel recounts how the communal forces in Zailgarh confronted each other. It resulted into a big riot in which many Hindus and Muslims were butchered. The novel is set in the background of Babri Masjid demolition. There were communal riots on a big scale all over India after the

destruction of the mosque. It eventuated in the year 1992. Just after two years of the writing of this novel, India confronted the biggest communal riots after partition. The novel is fascinating because the novelist had already prophesized the future course of Indian history.

The novel abounds in hate and killing. In spite of the communal frenzy, the novel is also an amazing love story between Lakshman, the District Magistrate and Priscilla, the slain American woman. Lakshman is a married man yet he falls in love with an American. He loved her so much that he was prepared to leave his position as a bureaucrat and go to the USA with Priscilla. Lakshman had physical relation with Priscilla. She was pregnant at the time of murder. Later she was killed in this riot. Many Hindus and Muslims were massacred but the novelist has concentrated only on Priscilla, an American. May be it is so because she was neither a Muslim nor a Hindu. There was no reason in her murder as the clash was only between Hindus and Muslims. Her parents visit India to investigate the cause and real culprits of their daughter's murder but they failed in their efforts. The mystery of Priscilla's murder could not be solved until the very end of the novel.

The novel also portrays cultural, historical and personal confrontations among the people. There is a conflict between the cultural values of East and West. East is represented by Lakshman while West by Priscilla. Despite loving each other passionately, they could not reconcile with the cultural values of each other.

Riot permeates historical clashes too. India has too much of history and that often poses a threat for her. The roots of communal conflicts between the Hindus and Muslims are perpetuated in the past of India. They desire to avenge the history but they forget as Tharoor believes “history in itself is revenge”.

The novel also offers an amazing commentary on the personal relationships of the different characters. Lakshman is dissatisfied with his wife as she does not take much interest in sex. Fatima is fed up of her husband who desires her to deliver a baby every year. Lakshman and Priscilla do not harmonize with the culture of each other. Rudyard and Katherine, the parents of Priscilla, represent the broken homes of USA. They are divorced from each other. The main reason of divorce was Rudyard’s infidelity. He had sexual relationships with another Indian woman when he was in India on a business mission of Coca Cola. The novel also hints towards the love relationship of Cindy, the friend of Priscilla and her boy friend. The readers do not have an access to it as the novelist never introduces the boy friend of Cindy. Thus the novel illustrates the cultural and historical clashes as well as the personal conflicts of different characters.

Tharoor’s next novel is *Show Business* (1991). In this novel, Tharoor has broken many myths of the glamorous life of Bollywood. He has attacked the charm of Bollywood. He satirizes actors, actresses and their life style. This novel is an attempt to expose the camouflaged truth of Bollywood. Here he has revealed what goes behind the curtains. Bollywood is very much associated

with the Indian society. The Indians are crazy about their celebrities and treat them like gods. These celebrities command great respect in Indian society. It is so because Indians judge their characters by the roles they play on the screen.

Tharoor has mocked these godlike figures in this novel and shattered certain myths related to them. Contrary to the expectation of Hindi cinema viewers, Tharoor has considered Bollywood to be a centre of all sorts of corruption. Sexual corruption is very customary in film industry. The directors and producers in the novel sexually exploit actors and actresses to give them a role in their movies.

Ashok is the hero of the novel. He receives high regard in Indian society. Tharoor has commented here on the personal life of Ashok. Ashok has sexual relations with many actresses and exploits them. He is unfaithful to his wife. He is unfair to his parents, brothers and friends. His personal life does not match his screen image. The novel accords an insight into the personal life of these celebrities and exposes the naked truth of their lives.

Like other novels of Tharoor, this novel also explains certain aspects of Indian politics. Ashok, the hero of Bollywood, joins politics. He is involved in financial corruption as he has a lot of black money. In politics too, he deceives people. He associated himself with politics just to earn money and not to serve people. The novel is also a mockery on the democratic institutions of India. The novel illustrates how democracy was subverted in India where an ordinary Indian has no idea of the political system and blindly supports the candidates. The novel also describes how the politics of India is dominated by the caste and

creed. In Indian politics, caste and faith have a vital role. Tharoor explains how the institutions of democracy are misused in India.

The novel has a very close resemblance to Shobha De's *Starry Nights* which also exposes the fact of Bollywood and political world. Like Tharoor, Shobha De has also revealed the dark aspects of Bollywood. She also offers a commentary on the prevalent sexual corruption in Bollywood. Her novel portrays certain political figures that have association with underworld. She has attempted to establish a relation between politics, Bollywood and underworld. Tharoor also takes up the same theme as Shobha De but he did not link Bollywood with the underworld.

Tharoor's *Show Business* is also rich in mythical aspects. Tharoor has dealt with a movie Kalki which is based on the mythology of India. Kalki is the incarnation of God. In movie, Kalki is also the name of the protagonist who ascended to earth in the Kalyuga. His incarnation on the earth is to eliminate evils from the world. Tharoor's hero Ashok is the incarnation of Kalki. He symbolizes the mythical figure. The movie is ironical as the very hero of the movie in himself is an embodiment of evil.

The novel is an over-all depiction of the degraded Bollywood and political world. The novelist has satirized different characters in the novel. He has shattered specific myths associated with Bollywood. The novel does not offer only entertainment but poses many solemn questions before the readers. For many cinema goers, the novel is a disappointed experience as the novelist has smashed many of the illusions of the ordinary people.

Tharoor's collection of short stories *The Five-Dollar Smile and Other Stories* (1990) is a satire on modern Indian society. He has penned the stories on various themes and topics. He has debunked numerous myths generally associated with the personal life of people. The collection deals with hypocrisy, infidelity, love affairs, death and personal relationships etc.

Tharoor has depicted the corruption predominant in relief agencies. Tharoor has mocked these classified relief agencies which exploit the orphans. Tharoor has also commented on the pre and extra marital love affairs in this collection of stories. He has exhibited the infidelity of many of house wives. Tharoor has explained how the so called respectable men and women indulge in sexual affairs out of their marriage. Tharoor has not only shattered the myth of the devoted wife but also attacked the institution of marriage. The institution of marriage is no more sacred since extra marital affairs are very common.

Tharoor has also described the arranged marriage system and satirized the civilized society. Even the educated people compel their children for marriages. Tharoor has also taken up the issues of intra-caste marriages and the problems related to it.

Tharoor seems to be preoccupied with the theme of Indian politics. One of the stories "The Political Murder" portrays the ugly face of Indian politics. The story describes how bureaucracy and politics join hands for their evil designs. Both the institutions are highly corrupt in India.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Tharoor, Shashi. *The Great India Novel*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1988.

---. *The Five-Dollar Smile and Other Stories*. New York: Arcade, 1990.

---. *Riot*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2001.

---. *Show Business*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1991.

---. *Bookless in Baghdad*. Delhi: Penguin, 2005.

---. *India: From Midnight to the Millennium*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1997.

---. *Nehru: The Invention of India*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2003.

---. *Kerala: God's Own Country*. New Delhi: Books Today, 2003.

---. *The Elephant, the Tiger, and the Cell Phone: Reflections on India, the Emerging 21st- Century Power* New Delhi: Penguin, 2007.

---. *Reasons of State: Political Development and India's Foreign Policy under Indira Gandhi 1966-1977*. New Delhi: Vikas Pub. House, 1982.

Tharoor, Shashi, and Shaharyar Khan. *Shadows Across the Playing Field: Sixty Years of India-Pakistan Cricket*. New Delhi: Roli Books, 2009.

Secondary Sources

- Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th ed. Bangalore: Heinle, 1999.
- Alexander, Horace. *Gandhi Through Western Eyes*. Bombay: Jayasinghe. 1969.
- Anand, T.S., ed. *Contemporary Indian Writing in English: critical perceptions*. New Delhi: Surup and Sons, 2005. 220-37
- Bhalla, Alok. *Partition Dialogues*. New Delhi: Oxford. 2006.
- Bhatnagar, Manmohan, K. "Indian English Literature- Its Rationale and A Critical Introduction." *Indian Writing in English*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar. Vol. 1. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 2001. 1-11. 9 vols.
- . "Alternate Realities – A Note on Indian English Literature." *Indian Writing in English*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar. Vol. 5. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 1999. 1-3. 9 vols.
- . "Appraising Indian English Literature—A New Agenda." *Indian Writing in English*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar. Vol. 3. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 1999. 1-13. 9 vols.
- . "Indian English Literature—A Perspective." *Indian Writing in English*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar. Vol. 2. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 2001. 1-17. 9 vols.
- . "Indian English Literature—A Stock Taking." *Indian Writing in English*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar. Vol. 4. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 1999. 1-13. 9 vols.
- . "Multiculturalism and Indian (English) Literature." *Indian Writing in English*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar and M. Rajeshwar. Vol. 9. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 2000. 5-13. 9 vols.
- . "The 'Complex Fate' of Indian English Literature." *Indian Writing in English*. Ed. M.K. Bhatnagar and M. Rajeshwar. Vol. 9. New Delhi: Atlantic Publisher, 2000. 1-4. 9 vols.
- Bhattacharya, Pradip. "The Great Indian Novel by Shashi Tharoor." spydistrict 18 Jul 2004. 10 Jul 2011. <<http://www.spydistrict.com/2011/05/great-indian-novel-by-shashi-tharoor.html>>
- Birdwood, C.B. *India's Freedom Struggle*. Delhi: Discovery. 1988.

- Brecher, Michael. *Succession in India: A study in decision-making*. Bombay: OUP. 1966.
- Chakrabarti, Merivirta. "Reclaiming India's History – Myth, History and Historiography in Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*." 09 Sep 2007. 10 Jul 2011. <<http://www.ennenjanyt.net/?p=89>>
- Chandra, Bipan. *India Since Independence*. New Delhi: Penguin. 2008.
- Chandra, Bipan. *India's Struggle for Independence*. New Delhi: Penguin. 1987.
- Chandra, Bipan. *Modern India*. New Delhi: NCERT. 1971.
- Chaudhary, Sourin. *How India won Freedom*. New Delhi: S. Chand and Co. 1987.
- De, Shobha. *The Shobha De Omnibus*. New Delhi: Viking, 1995.
- Dhir, Paras. "Shashi Tharoor's Riot: Perspectives on History, Politics and Culture" *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* Summer Issue, Volume I, Number 1, 2009.
- Dodiya, Jaidip Singh. "The Changing Trends in Indian Writing in English with Special reference to Shobha De." *Indian writing in English Perspectives*. Ed. Joya Chakravarty. New Delhi, 2003. 83-86.
- Fowler, Roger. "Polyphony in Hard Times." *Language, Discourse and Literature: An Introductory Reader in Discourse Stylistics*. Ed. Ronald Carter and Paul Simpson. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989.
- Gandhi, Lingaraja. "An Interview with Dr. Mulk Raj Anand." *Indian English Literature*. Ed. Basavaraj Naikar. Vol. 7. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2007.
- Ganti, Tejaswini. *Bollywood : A Guide to Popular Hindi Cinema*. New York and London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2004.
- Godbole, Madhav. *The Holocaust of Indian Partition: An Inquest*. New Delhi: Rupa. 2006.
- Kaufman, Glenn J. "Divya Dham: A Temple in Transition" 26 Apr 2006. 10 May 2011 <<http://www.barnard.edu/arx/html/hinduismhere/glen.html>>
- Khan, Mohamed Raza. *What Price Freedom*. Madras: Nuri. 1969.
- Kotnala, Sanjeev. "RIOT by SHASHI THAROOR" 4 Apr 2011. 10 May 2011 <<http://sanjeevkotnala.blog.co.in/2011/04/04/riot-by-shashi-tharoor/>>

- Kumar, Nanda. "Multiplicity of Voices in the novels of Shashi Tharoor" 9 Oct 2007. 10 May 2011 <<http://nandantk.blogspot.com/2007/10/multiplicity-of-voices-in-novels-of.html>>
- Lal, P., tr. *The Mahabharata of Ved Vyasa*. New Delhi: Vikas publishing house private limited, 1980.
- Lal, Shiv. *India's Freedom Fighters in South East Asia*. Ed
- Mackenzie, Donald A. *India: Myths and Legend Series*. London: Greesham. 1985.
- Marston, Daniel P. and Chandar S. Sundaram. *A Military History of India and South Asia: From East India Company to the Nuclear Era*. New Delhi. Pentagon. 2008.
- McWilliam, Candia. "BOOK REVIEW / Bollywood still lives: Show Business by Shashi Tharoor: Picador, pounds 15.99" 29 May 1994. 10 May 2011 <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/book-review--bollywood-still-lives-show-business-by-shashi-tharoor-picador-pounds-1599-1439358.html>>
- Mee, Jon. "After Midnight: The Novel in the 1980s and 1990s." *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English*. Ed. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003. 318-336.
- Mehrotra, Arvind Krishna., ed. *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003. 318-36
- Mendonca, Allen J, and Kanak Hirani. "Shashi Tharoor's a riot" TNN. 12 Aug 2002. 10 May 2011 <<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bangalore-times/Shashi-Tharoors-a-riot/articleshow/18893640.cms>>
- Mishra, D.S. "Modern Indian Writing in English: An Overview." *Modern Indian Writing in English: An Overview*. Ed. N.D.R. Chandra. 1st ed. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2004. 1-47.
- Narasimhaiah, C. D. "Making of Indian English: Some Reflections." *Makers of Indian English Literature*. 1st ed. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2000.15-36
- Nehru, Jawahar Lal. *The Discovery of India*. New Delhi: JL Nehru Memorial Fund. 1981.
- Paranjape, Makarand. "Common Myths and Misconceptions about Indian English Literature." *Rethinking of Indian English Literature*. Ed.

- U.M.Nanavati and Prafulle C. Kaur. 1st ed. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2000. 55-70.
- Raina, Satnam Kaur. "Theme of Partition in the Post-Independence Indian Fiction in English." *Trends in Indian English Literature*. Ed. T.S. Anand. 1st ed. New Delhi: Creative Books, 2008. 105-113.
- Raman, Meenakshi. "Shashi Tharoor's Riot: A Showcase of Multiple Perspectives." *Contemporary Indian Writing in English: Critical Perceptions*. Ed. N.D.R. Chandra. 1st ed. Vol. 2. New Delhi: Surup and Sons, 2005. 220-237.
- Roy, Surendra. *The Independent India: A Political Glimpse 1947-2000*. Samastipur: ????, ????
- Sandhu, Sukhdev. "In a Cinema near you" 20 Apr 2002. 10 May 2011 <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4727696/In-a-cinema-near-you.html>>
- Seervai, H.M. *Partition of India: Legend and Reality*. Bombay: Emmenem. 1989.
- Sharma, Ajai. "Midnight's Children in the Light of Vakrokti." *New Perspectives on Indian English Writings*. Ed. Malti Agarwal. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2007. 198-205.
- Sharma, Amrendra K. and Manju Roy. *The Grammar of Conflicts in Riot*. IRWLE VOL. 6 No. I January 2010.
- Sharma, Amrendra. "Priscilla Hart's Search for Identities in *Riot*" *The Indian Review of World Literature in English*, Vol. 5 No.II – July, 2009.
- Sharma, Rajesh Kumar. "A Note on Contemporary Indian Fiction in English." *Trends in Indian English Literature*. Ed. T.S. Anand. 1st ed. New Delhi: Creative Books, 2008. 99-104.
- Singh, Farbat. "INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL WRITING: SHIFTING THEMES & THOUGHTS - (With special Referance to Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh)". *International Research Journal* , July 2010 ISSN-0975-3486 RNI: RAJBIL 2009/30097 VOL I *ISSUE 10.
- Srinath, C.N. "The Invisible Indian English Fiction." *Critical Responses to Indian Writing in English (Essays in Honour of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam)*. Ed. K. Balachandran. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2004. 112-125.

Takhar, Jennifer. "Identity Through Bollywood Cinema: The Reel or Real Zone?" Issue No.5, October 2002. 10 Jul 2011.
<http://www.sikhspectrum.com/102002/j_bollywood.htm>

Talvekar, Mandar. "Book Review: *Show Business - A Novel* by Shashi Tharoor" 11 Aug 2006. 10 May 2011
<<http://inkscrawl.blogspot.com/2006/08/book-review-show-business-novel-by.html>>

Tewari, V.K.. *Bakhtin: Dialogics of language*. New Delhi: Suman Khanna for BOOK PLUS, 2001

Tharoor, Shashi. "I don't take critics seriously." Vivacity. 02 Jun 2011. 10 Jul 2011.
<<http://www.dailypioneer.com/337239/%E2%80%98I-don%E2%80%99t-take-critics-seriously%E2%80%99.html>>

---. "Master of Satire." 2004. 20 May 2011. <<http://tharoor.in/press/master-of-satire/>>

---. "The Shashi Tharoor column: A departure, fictionally" The Hindu. 16 Sep 2001. 10 May 2011
<<http://hindu.com/thehindu/2001/09/16/stories/13160675.htm>>

---. "The Shashi Tharoor column: A departure, fictionally" The Hindu. 16 Sep 2001. 10 May 2011
<<http://hindu.com/thehindu/2001/09/16/stories/13160675.htm>>

---. Interview with Joanne J. Myers. *Sectarian Violence in India: The Story of the One Riot*. Public Affairs Program. 28 Nov 2001. 10 May 2011
<<http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/resources/transcripts/695.html>>

---. Interview with Joanne J. Myers. *Sectarian Violence in India: The Story of the One Riot*. Public Affairs Program. 28 Nov 2001. 10 May 2011
<<http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/resources/transcripts/695.html>>

---. "Striking back with the Emergency ... Indira Gandhi." *Experiment with Autocracy*. 14 Apr 2002. 10 Jul 2011.
<<http://www.hinduonnet.com/mag/2002/04/14/stories/2002041400120300.htm>>

Waugh, Patricia. *Literary Theory and Criticism*. New Delhi: OUP, 2006.

Williams, Hayden Moore. "Indian Literature in English : Colonial and Post-Colonial: Social Change and Indian Inwardness." *Galaxy of Indian Writing in English*. Delhi: Akshat Publication, 1987. 1-11.

Willis, Roy, ed. *World Mythology*. London: General Editor Duncan Baird Publishers Ltd, 2006.

Yadav, Shiv Kumar. "Malgonkar's Balancing Acts of Gandhian Ideals in A Bend in the Ganges." *Indian writing in English*. Ed. Mohit K. Ray. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2003. 53-66.

Zakaria, Rafiq. *The Man who Divided India: An insight into Jinnah's leadership and its aftermath*. Mumbai. Popular. 2002.